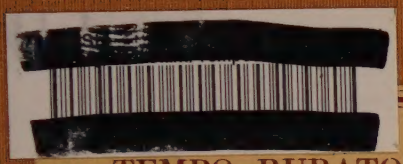


TEMPO RUBATO

AND

OTHER ESSAYS

780.4
St4

Property of
Bryn Mawr College
Library
DISCARDED

TEMPO RUBATO

AND

OTHER ESSAYS

By

Constantin von Sternberg

Author of
"The Ethics and Esthetics of Piano Playing"

G. SCHIRMER

NEW YORK · BOSTON

Copyright, 1920
By G. SCHIRMER
29451

TO MY FORMER PUPIL AND LOYAL FRIEND

ROBERT ARMBRUSTER

074

CONTENTS

I. Tempo Rubato 3

II. On Plagiarism 15

III. The Author's Authority 31

IV. Does Music Describe? 55

V. National Music and the Negro 67

VI. The Artist and his Talent 85

VII. On Artists' Biographies 111

VIII. Civilization, Culture and Music 137

My grateful acknowledgement is due to the publishers of the "Musical Quarterly" and the "Etude" for their permission to use the material of the first two of the following essays; the remaining ones are new.

TEMPO RUBATO

TEMPO RUBATO

There is in musical terminology no word under cover of which quite so many sins are committed as under *tempo rubato.* Chopin deservedly receives the credit for having discovered it, but many who thus credit him hold very strange ideas about it. There are those who suffer with a technic too unreliable to keep them steady in prolonged rapid passages and when they run away with the tempo they palm their weakness off as "tempo rubato." Then there are those who believe that the use of tempo rubato begins with the works of Chopin and that it must not be employed in any music written before him. There are also the arch-pedants who insist that tempo rubato not only begins but also ends with Chopin's compositions. All of which is, of course, pure cant, the bulwark of ignorance and bigotry.

If Chopin coined the term tempo rubato, his coinage was certainly not particularly happy; he could scarcely have hit upon words more ambiguous and less descriptive of their object. "With freedom of time" (tempo *libero*), "vacillating or wavering time" (tempo vacillando), or "undecided time" (tempo indeciso), would have done as well and would have been more easily understood by nations that do not speak Italian, of which—by the way—Chopin's knowledge was very limited.

Above all, however, a clearer term would have prevented that occultism, that mystery, with which so many people still connect the tempo rubato. It is amusing to note that even some serious persons express the idea that in tempo rubato "the right hand may use a certain freedom while the left hand must keep strict time." (See Niecks' *Life of Chopin*, II, p. 101.) A nice sort of music would result from such playing! Something like the singing of a good vocalist accompanied by a poor blockhead who hammers away in strict time without yielding to the singer who, in sheer despair, must renounce all artistic expression. It is reported by some ladies that Chopin himself gave them this explanation, but—they might not have understood him as well as did Wilhelm von Lenz, to whom he said: "Suppose a piece lasts so and so many minutes; if only the whole lasts so long, differences in the details do not matter." The two precepts are somewhat contradictory, but of that I shall offer an explanation a little later and shall mark it with an asterisk (*). I well remember an old gentleman, a Pole, whom I met in Paris many years ago, and who in his younger years had piano lessons from Chopin. He talked scarcely of anything else than tempo rubato; the compositions of Chopin were to him only the raw material to which the tempo rubato was to be applied. He described it as "unfathomable, inexplicable," and then talked for an hour explaining

it. The trouble was only that, as often as I met him, the explanation was never the same, until one day he capped the climax by saying with a sigh: "Ah, my young friend, no one but a Pole understands the tempo rubato; that is why only a Pole can play Chopin, and of all the Poles there is really only one—but, come to think of it, no—no—he cannot, either!"

Such mystery-mongering is, of course, pure tommy-rot; as much so as some of the gushing melliflux about it in which some of Chopin's biographers have indulged. While an artistically perfect rubato will ever be attainable only by a well-trained and finely-organized artistic nature (taking the technic for granted), the rubato does not in this respect differ from other artistic attainments. The greater the artist, the better he will play everything and consequently also the rubato. But that does not shut all the rest of musiciandom out from a rational—or let me say esthetic—understanding of it.

A discovery is not an invention. Discovering means to become conscious of the existence of something that has preëxisted and of which we were not cognizant heretofore. Just as the American continent had existed before Columbus chanced to discover it, so had the tempo rubato existed before it dawned upon Chopin's consciousness. Intensely musical natures, such as Bach, Beethoven and like masters, cannot by any possibility have played their compo-

sitions with the stiff regularity of metronomic beats. The mere assuming of such an absurdity would be an insult to their genius. It is only reasonable to believe that every one of them played occasionally rubato, although they may have been as unconscious of it as was my dear old (first) teacher, Moscheles. He proposed to play a Beethoven Adagio with all the expression it required and still keep strict time—and then he sat down at the piano and played a most beautiful rubato, for he was a consummate artist. And when he had finished he commented upon how strictly he had kept time. The masters before Chopin had simply not been *conscious* of their rubato playing, and besides, one master's rubato was fairly certain to differ from that of another master, according to the cast of their melodies and phrases; it is, nevertheless, safe to take it for granted that *no musician, capable of sensing the musical feeling of a melody, ever played it in strict time.* It would have gone as much against the grain of *his* musical nature as it would have been contrary to *the nature of music.* If vacillations of movement are inadmissible in the works (say) of Beethoven, then an orchestra playing one of his symphonies should need no conductor; a large metronome would do just as well as far as the tempo is concerned.

If I now may venture to express the hope of having satisfied the reader on my first point, namely, that

the works of Chopin had no monopoly of an artistically free treatment of the matter of time-keeping, I may proceed to deal with the subject directly and begin by calling attention to certain verities concerning art: first, that ultimately all art is one; second, that the various branches of art differ only in their materials and in the province of their subjects; third, that the esthetic principles are the same whether we speak of painting, poetry or music. A painter, interpreting upon the canvas the feelings which a particular landscape under certain conditions of light, etc., has awakened in him, is as free and as unfree in his work as is an elocutionist in reciting a poem or a musician interpreting a composition. What nature *meant* to say in that particular landscape, no one can tell any more than what a composer meant to say in a composition. The painter can strive only to reproduce on his canvas what *he* saw in that landscape. That is his incontestable right, his freedom, but—whether his canvas measures one square foot or ten feet by twenty—he must not paint on the frame; he must keep within his canvas and make the dimensions of the visible objects proportionate to the size of his canvas. He may, however, enlarge or reduce in size any detail as his conception and its expression may prompt him to do. It is quite similar with the elocutionist; supposing a given poem contains 2000 syllables and it takes him five minutes to

recite it, he certainly is not obliged to pronounce exactly 400 syllables in each minute. He is free to speak certain words or lines slower and certain others faster. Neither is it his duty to emphasize the scanning, nor is he bound to stop at the end of a line if the sentence extends to the next one. What he endeavors to convey is neither the correct number of feet in every meter nor the assonance of the rhymes, but the literary *human sense* of the poem. Just so it is with the executive musician; a composition containing 300 measures which, played in strict time, takes five minutes, should not occupy more than five minutes, rubato or no rubato; but this does not compel the player to play exactly one measure in every second; any mechanical playing-machine can do *that*. The analysis of a piece shows us its parts, sections, periods, phrases, sub-phrases, motives, etc.; in the rendition or interpretation of the piece the player may part company with his metronome (I refer to it only metaphorically) after the very first beats; but at the conclusion of a part, section or period he and his metronome should be together again and the number of its beats should tally with the time the player consumed—tally *approximately*, at least. Of course, this is a somewhat drastic or extreme way of putting it and I, therefore, said "approximately" in order that some super-smart criticaster may not take me too literally; but in spite of its barn-door size the

hint may serve to intimate the nature of tempo rubato and to remove or solve the "mystery" of it. Those rare members of amateurdom who play such pieces only as are within the scope of their technic, play them as a rule very well, and they may, therefore, use the rubato to their heart's content, because their attention to the musical inwardness of the pieces will not be diverted by grappling with difficulties beyond their pale; but the average amateur had better stick to strict time, at least until—well—until some good musician assures him that the piece is well learned.

In conjunction with the rubato question I should like to say a word about its first cousin, the occasional, annotated or prescribed *ritardando* or *ritenuto*, synonyms in effect. While there are cases in which the idea I have in mind does not, or not necessarily, apply, as I admit freely and in advance, those cases are so infrequent as to be counted as exceptions. Taking the matter by and large, I think that a retard is an *undulation in the motion* of a piece. Now, an undulation consists of a gentle, gradual elevation and corresponding depression, of hills and valleys. And I incline to the belief that every casual *ritardando* implies a proportionate *accelerando* either before or after it, unless the *ritardando* serves to lead into an altogether slower movement. My orthodox friends may fall back upon their pet argument that the composer, if he had

meant it, would have said so; but, alas, we cannot always *jurare in verba magistri.* Men of genius have nearly always "builded better than they knew." It was almost invariably left for posterity to analyze and explain what a master's genius hit upon by instinct, intuition, or whatever name we may give to the mysterious impelling force which prompts and moves genius. Nearly every great master has exceeded the limits of an established, time-honored law; what made him do it was not a dishonest striving for mere novelty, but the distinct feeling of a *higher law*—of a law which he could not formulate and explain (not even to himself), but of which he felt the presence and the compelling force so strongly as to be unable to ignore and withstand it. Posterity, viewing his lifework in the correlating perspective of time, has usually understood this law much more clearly than the genius who felt and obeyed it instinctively; for it was from his very works that posterity deduced the law and formulated it. It was so in music as well as in many other fields of thought, and it is, more than probably, so in the case of the casual *ritardando.*

When we speak of hills it is not necessary to specify every time that there are, of course, valleys between them; and, inversely, does not the very idea of a valley imply the presence of hills?*

*See my "Ethics and Esthetics," Schirmer, New York, 1918.

This obviousness may be the reason why the counterbalancing acceleration before or after the retard is so seldom specified; but it is just as probable that a master (in this case Chopin), while *feeling* this law perhaps more strongly than we do, did not *understand* it and its workings as clearly.

The great law which governs the motion of the universe is *Balance!* And this law is as powerful and pervasive in art as it is in every other phase of physical and spiritual life. Hence, when a certain amount of time has been borrowed in one place—or "stolen," as Chopin chose to call it—the law of balance ordains that this amount of time should be made up for in another place. When we reflect that tempo rubato consists, after all, only of ritardandos and accelerandos, it seems quite possible that Chopin's "rubato" may mean only an abbreviation for retard and corresponding hurrying, implying the two ideas together and distinguishing the combination from a mere retard.

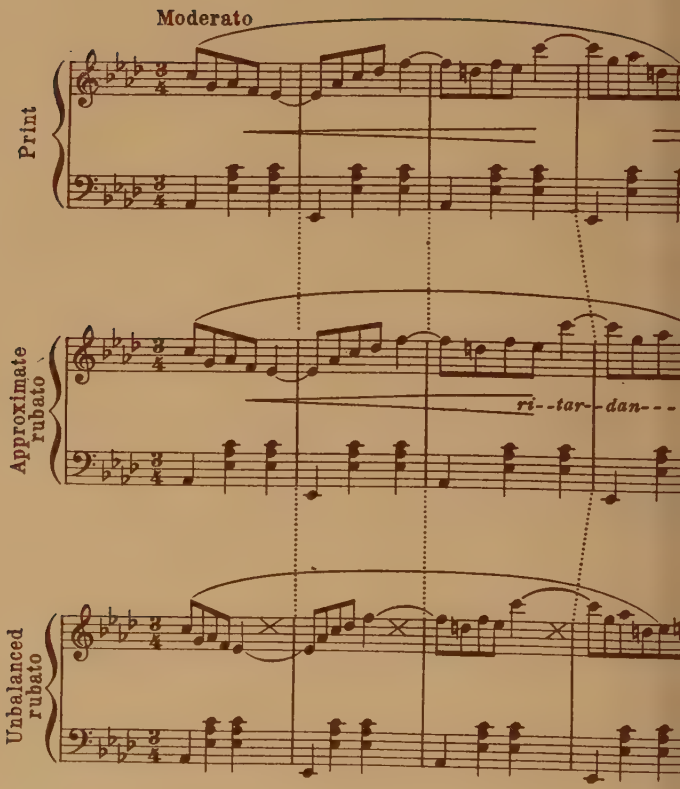
Hector Berlioz, a serious and benevolent critic who in his day was surely a *modern* musician, wrote of Chopin's piano playing that "he pushed rhythmical independence much too far." I have heard a similar opinion expressed—though in the kindliest possible terms—by Liszt. It is, therefore, quite probable, that the novel charms of time-freedom induced Chopin to overdo his "liberties" sometimes; but, if so, it would be but another proof of it that

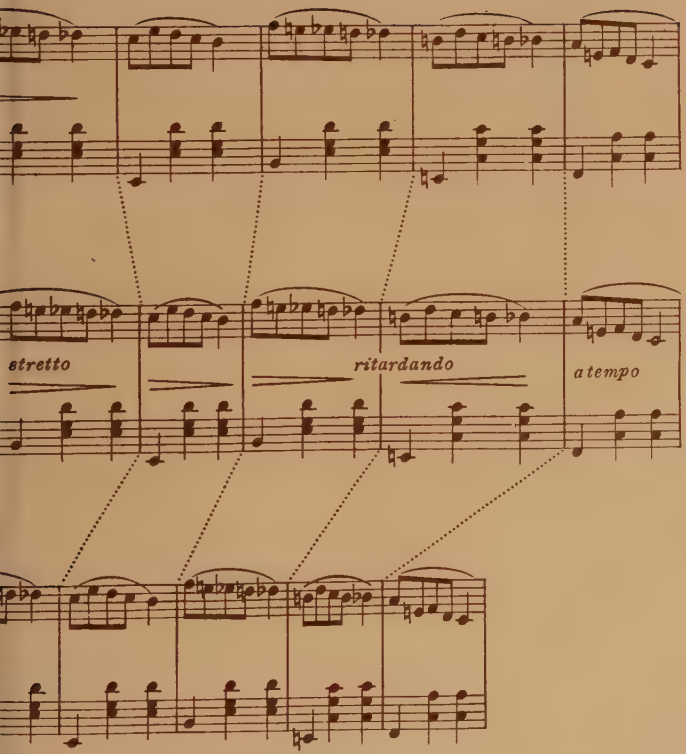
he rather *felt* than *understood* the new self-discovered truth; we can and must play in *rhythm*, but we need not keep strict *time* whenever our feelings (their expression) forbid it.

*

* *

The following example can, of course, be only an approximation; but in its second version it shows that at the end of the period of eight measures the rubato rendition and the rendition in strict time meet again and that the deviations from strict time are as balanced as if they had not occurred. In the third version attention may be called to the places marked with a cross. These places show that the player went through the measure too fast and that the time thus gained had to be balanced by an unwarranted waiting at the end of each measure. As he made no retard before arriving at measures five, six and seven—which were to be played faster—he finished his period by nearly two measures too early and thus put the entire rhythmical arrangement awry. I think that these few words are necessary to elucidate what in script or print is next to impossible to demonstrate.


Moderato
Print
Approximate rubato
ri--tar--dan---
Unbalanced rubato


stretto
ritardando
a tempo

ON PLAGIARISM

ON PLAGIARISM

In one of his beautiful "Essays in Little" Andrew Lang very wisely observes that "there are charges, *that of plagiarism, for example,* which can never be disproven, even if any mortal ever listened to a refutation." This quotation will, I trust, help to forestall any serious disappointment to the reader if he finds this discussion as inconclusive as, from the nature of the subject, it is bound to be.

The foregoing quotation reminds the present writer of two lawsuits between composers over matters of plagiarism; if the conflict between the judicial and the moral law (the categorical imperative) were not confirmed by its great age and its frequency, the decisions in these two suits would suffice to render it obvious.

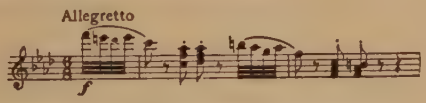
One of the two battle-grounds was, some years ago, in Germany. The case was handled by lawyers and judges who, as a class or type of men, see life only through the judicial telescope and as a rule know too little of its contingencies and haphazards to make allowance for such a thing as a "chance resemblance"—*especially in music.* The perfectly innocent defendant was fined and the sale and public performance of his work was forbidden, although the resemblance in question occurred in only two measures in the middle of the piece and resulted

from a perfectly legitimate development of the *defendant's own theme.*

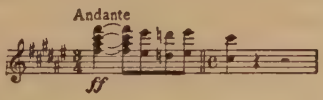
The other suit took place in this country and was decided by a jury, but the verdict was, nevertheless given to the wrong man: the manifest culprit was *acquitted.* The gas-fitter, boiler-maker, car-conductor, waiter, etc., that sat in the jury box, however highly to be respected as useful members of human society, as citizens and gentlemen—their knowledge of music ought not have been expected to be adequate to the discerning of a plagiarism which was undoubtable, although it was disguised or—as we sometimes say—"dodged."

And of such "dodges" there is no end. Any tyro, conversant with the technic of harmonization and counterpoint, can crib entire pages from a masterpiece and disguise them in such ways as to make it impossible for an untrained eye and ear to recognize the fraud. He can produce the changes by altering the time, rhythm, harmony; phrasing of the theme, or by inverting, enlarging or foreshortening it. He can thus "contrive" a piece of music that may jingle pleasantly and still express nothing imaginative or emotional because neither his imagination nor his emotion were in the least active in the "making" of it. He *felt* nothing and could, therefore, do no more than put into artificially changed—and feebler—terms what was originally an utterance of another and better man's innermost soul.

The technic of reshaping a musical thought is, in itself, not only legitimate; it not only underlies such variation writing as Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and others, have given to the world, but it is also one of the most powerful means of dramatic expression in opera and symphony. For illustration of this we need not go back to Beethoven's "Fifth," where the opening notes run in a variety of shapes through all the four movements. Much more recently we find it, for example, in Bizet's "Carmen," where the motive of Fate appears in every act and in many different forms and moods. Who would suspect the motive of "Fate" in this light-hearted, dance-like strain:



Yet it appears with Carmen's first step on the stage and follows her in a number of disguises through the whole sad story until, at the end, it is thundered forth as a consummation of thrilling tragedy, in slow ¾ time:

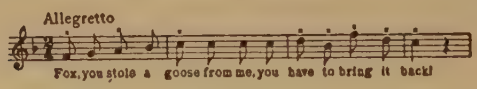


Wagner, too, was a great master in the recasting of motives to suit the dramatic situation. His motives,

as such, are often of an almost naïve simplicity; but what he does with them, what he extracts and develops from them—that is not merely another story: it is *the* story that tells the difference between a master's *purposed alteration* of his own theme and a dodged or *disguised plagiarism.*

Ruskin said that "originality is not newness, but *genuineness,*" by which he meant, no doubt, that a thought evolved from an artist's mood and feeling bears the family traits of its parent so plainly that no "chance resemblance," however striking, can contest its "genuineness."

There is, e.g., an unmistakable resemblance between this old German children's song:

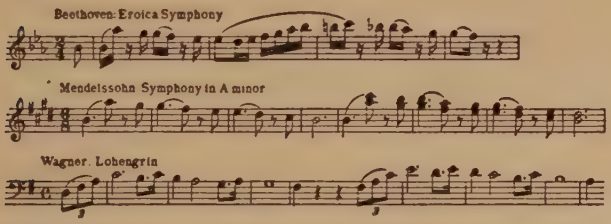


and the well known "Happy Farmer" by Schumann:

yet no musician ever regarded the resemblance as anything but a funny coincidence, because—aside from Schumann's inexhaustible wealth of musical ideas, which made cribbing quite unnecessary to him—his version, with its two sustained notes, is so masculine, so "grown-up," so intrinsically different from the rhythmically monotonous, childlike

prattling of the song, as to silence even the most malevolent reminiscence-hunter. (Reminiscence-hunting is, even at best, an ignoble sport.)

A still more striking example of chance resemblance we find in the following three quotations; but before charging Mendelssohn and Wagner with so plebeian a thing as plagiarism, let us remember that these two masters had absolute command over all the means of concealing a "loan," if it had been one; that the very closeness of the parallelism attests their innocence and does it better than a more remote likeness could have done:



It so happens that these three notes

are the chief motive of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 111, of Schubert's "Atlas," of Liszt's "Les Préludes," and of no inconsiderable number of other compositions. Speaking, however, only of these three, the moods expressed in them through these three notes have absolutely nothing in common and thereby furnish "internal evidence" against any sus-

picion of plagiarism—which charge has, in fact, never been made.

At this juncture we should reflect that human language is constantly changing. Under the influence of politico-historical events, of scientific discoveries and inventions, or of changes in theological or natural philosophy, certain forms of expression, spoken or written, come into general use. After a while they die out and new ones take their places. These changes affect not only rhetoric and oratory, but are occurring in all forms of human expression and, hence, also in all branches of art. If we should have to say of a certain melody by a living composer that it was of a Mozartian cast, we should not have Mozart, himself, in mind, but rather the style and manner of musical idiom that was general in Mozart's time. The same applies, of course, to any other great composer's period of life, and it explains, partly at least, the sway of the masters over the musical parlance of their time. Their mode of expression reflected the spirit of their time, the genius of their people. That their work retained its art-value for many subsequent generations and for all the world is not due to its vocabulary, but to the thoughts, to the world-view for which the musical wording served merely as a vehicle. However highly we may still think of the *Rambler* papers and of *Rasselas*, we could not venture nowadays to speak or write in good Dr.

Johnson's style without being charged with affectation. And yet, in his day, his style of writing was general among his literary contemporaries without exposing them to the reproach of plagiarism. It is very similar in music and in all other branches of art.

A few years ago the present writer bought from one of the *bouquinistes* on the Quai d'Orsay an old reprint of the *Gesta Romanorum*, the oldest book of Christian legends in existence, and he found in it the entire plot of—Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, complete in every detail and told in a little over five pages. Does this discovery (made by others long ago, by the way) detract one iota from Shakespeare's masterly play? Are not all, or nearly all, the plots of his plays taken from other sources? And can we, because of this, call Shakespeare a "play"-giarist? (Excuse the pun, dear reader!) If two artists should happen to paint the same landscape or a portrait of the same person, would the second one be a plagiarist? If not, why not? Because, in spite of the identical features, the pictures would still differ from each other and the difference would consist in the personal conception of the subject—in that which each of the two artists *saw* in the subject.

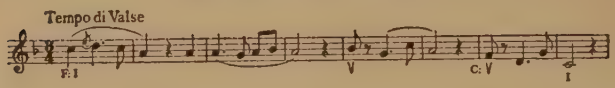
By this time the reader might ask: If all this is *not* plagiarism, what, then, *does* constitute it?—Let us see.

A genuine pearl is never without some slight—what shall we call it? It is not a "defect," not an "imperfection," but merely some slight irregularity of shape or color or both; a "deviation" from the regular which, however, gives character to the pearl. The imitation pearl is always perfectly round and tediously even in color; it is, in one sense, better than the genuine pearl, but—it lacks life, character. Just so it is in music, where a plagiarism is always smooth, but lacking that mysterious something which made the original "say something." The plagiarist is a thief, and therefore it must be his first endeavor to cover his tracks by making some alteration in the unessential part of what he stole, to use some disguise in order to be protected from the law—a sort of musical "alibi." We often recognize the fraud by its effect upon our mind, for, if we happen to know the original, the essential part of the fraud will remind us of something which at that moment we cannot place, but which produces the distinct feeling of having heard the just presented thought before and more convincingly expressed. So, we rummage in our memory (with some irritation, too), instead of listening to the remainder of the piece in progress. To refer once more to the metaphorical imitation pearl and what it lacked, the parallel with plagiarism is made rather clear by G. B. Shaw in his "Dramatic Opinions," where he speaks with an earnestness somewhat unusual with him. Says he:

"In all the arts there is a distinction between the mere *physical* artistic faculty—consisting of a very fine sense of color, tone, form, rhythmic motion and so on—and that supreme sense of *humanity* which alone can raise the art work, created by the physical artistic faculty, into a convincing presentment of life."

It is more than doubtful that he could have found so profound a truth if he were not the *musical* connoisseur that he is, for his words apply with quite particular force to music. It is this "supreme sense of humanity" which explains the longevity of great masterpieces of all kinds and which, by the very nature of it, cannot obtain in a plagiarism. As Horace Traubel puts it: "Some music comes from nature, from life, and some comes from other music." Now it does happen to perfectly honest men that a thought occurs to them which, in the best of faith, they take for their own; it may, in fact, be genuinely original with them; but there are certain phrases in music which enjoy so wide a popularity that a prudent writer will and must avoid any resemblance with them as carefully as the architect has to avoid lines that suggest a human face. No dramatist or novelist could afford to let one of his characters say: "To continue this earthly life or not to continue it,

that is the uncertainty in my mind." No more could a musician allow a Waltz like this:



to go into print, however certain he might feel that he had no thought of Bizet. Resignation may come hard but—the waste-basket is the only place for that Waltz.

Ah, it's a long chapter, that of plagiarism. Here is still another phase of it! There are cases where a really good idea occurs to one who is utterly unable to develop it; to one who through lack of talent or learning (usually both) is incapable of perceiving and realizing its artistic possibilities. If he has hit upon such an idea, as a blind hen hits upon a grain of wheat in the sand, and some other man, who is mentally and by innate talent equipped, sees and feels what to the first one was a blank, there is no reason why this second one should not regard the idea as he does any other bit of audible nature and do with it what was not within the power of the first one to do. This phase of plagiarism is very aptly analyzed by C. C. Colton (in "Lacon"):

"There are but two modes to obtain celebrity in authorship: discovery and conquest. Discovery, by saying what none others have said, with the proviso that it be true as well as new; and conquest, by

saying what others have said, but with more point, brevity and brightness."

Some such idea of "conquest" Handel may have "felt in his bones" when he "appropriated" an idea of Buononcini's and, having had his attention called to it, said: "Iss it? Vell, it's much too goot for him [here follows an adjective that is better suppressed], he ditt not know what to do mit it!"

So we see (although stealing is stealing, no matter how cleverly done) that theft changes its aspect considerably if the thief can make of the stolen object something better than the former owner was able to make; in other words, the thief must have the power to *keep* what he stole! We know that this proviso has been of no small importance in the building of Empires; those that could not keep their cribbings had to return them, as we have seen only recently; others were somehow able to keep theirs. During one of the first rehearsals of "Die Walküre" in Bayreuth Wagner said with the utmost candor to Liszt: "Papa, now you will hear something from your St. Elizabeth" (or was it St. Cecilia?), and Liszt replied: "Really? Oh well, then it will at least be heard." An absolute parallel with Handel! Wagner had found in Liszt's work an idea which its creator had underestimated, something which Wagner regarded as particularly worthy to live if it were fully worked out or elaborated. So, he did it and "kept" what he stole in the wonderful

symphonic introduction to the third scene of the second act. It need scarcely be said that in the musical significance of these two masters there was not anything like the difference that was between Gluck and Piccini or between Handel and Buononcini; still, by some few degrees Wagner was the greater of the two and hence he became by "conquest" the owner of one of Liszt's ideas. *Beati possidentes!*

A privilege which was generally thought to be reserved for governments—the privilege of "eminent domain" (the controlling of personal property for public uses by making compensation)—genius seems to have "adopted,"—and made compensation by teaching the former owner a lesson, showing him how blind he was to the value of his idea. Of course, the assuming of this privilege may be sternly disapproved by stiff-necked moralists of the Puritan type; yet even they would instantly change their attitude if the case were reversed. If some little Nobody should steal from a man of recognized genius he would be immediately caught and punished by—hilarious laughter, in which even the *unco guid* would heartily join. Thus, when Genius steals, he commits a sly little roguery, for he subsequently establishes his right of possession by the magnificent use he makes of his "annexation"; but when Mr. Tom Noddy steals, he is simply a fool. The one, single silver spoon among his tin tableware will

arouse suspicion at once; besides, it bears the "hall-mark" of genius which will betray the thief, and before he knows it the whole police force of musical criticism will be after him.

All this is, unfortunately, very inconclusive; but this was foretold in the opening paragraph. Still, Andrew Lang's statement there, that a charge of plagiarism cannot be *disproven*, may open a path toward a partial conclusion; for what has never been charged *need* not be disproven. Thus the whole matter seems to hinge upon the question whether a charge has or has not been made.

We saw that both Mendelssohn and Wagner used an idea which had first occurred to Beethoven and was well developed by him; and yet no accuser has ever risen to charge the former two with plagiarism. Why not? Because the world was convinced of the integrity of these men. They have, concerning their inventive power, satisfied the world to so high a degree that in case of a similitude in melody it has accepted it as a pure "chance resemblance" and has taken for granted that the idea in question was genuinely original with each of them. It leaves the matter of plagiarism entirely to the judgment of the musical world.

A Spanish proverb says: "One man makes charcoal from his wood and another man carves a Saint out of it." The reproach of plagiarism is either silenced by the fact that the plagiator has expounded an

idea better than its originator did, or there has been no accusation made because the resemblance has been for good reasons accepted as fortuitous. No accuser, no conviction! No charge, no refutation!

THE AUTHOR'S AUTHORITY

THE AUTHOR'S AUTHORITY

The author's authority seems to be axiomatic; a self-evident fact about which nothing more is to be said. For a lifetime one has heard with tireless repetition such maxims as these:

> "Play what is written!"
>
> "Play in time!" (Dear, well-meaning Schumann!)
>
> "The author knew what he wanted to say; had he wished it different he would have said so, black on white!"
>
> And so forth, *ad infinitum et nauseam.*

But when scrutinized closely we find that the author's authority is not nearly so self-evident as it looks. We find it, indeed, very limited; we also feel that its limitations rest upon the very nature and history of Music and of musical script and instruments. And we discover many opportunities for the interpreter to exercise legitimate criticism upon the author's clerical craftsmanship.

First of all we must recognize that the composer's artistry consists of two distinct and widely different parts: the composition as it is conceived and worked out by the mind, and its communication to the world in writing. These two parts are supposed to be in perfect balance, the latter entirely adequate to the former; but it is very seldom, perhaps never,

so. This is because the imagination, the fancy, the mental and emotional concepts, form themselves in the mind with absolute freedom and in sovereign indifference to any restriction of a practical or technical nature, while the graphic demonstration of these creations, on paper, is quite different. The slow and tedious process of writing is carried on under completely changed conditions; the *furor creans* has subsided; the ideal creations of the ecstatic mind have now to be soberly subjected to the established modes and signs of musical script; the creator turns communicator and into this, often wearisome, occupation there enter considerations of all sorts, retarding his advance with a frequency proportionate to the originality of his work. Harmonic progressions that sounded inexpressibly smooth and sweet to his "inner" ear, have now to be logically reasoned out; the limitations of the instrument must be thought of; technical difficulties have to be kept within bounds that they may not outweigh the thought-material; in enharmonic occurrences the tonality must be selected; time, simple or complex, must be decided upon; new thoughts frequently require new graphic symbols or, at least, new ways of employing old ones, and these are not always ready at hand—in short, there is a multiplicity of considerations entering into the *clerical* part of musical composition; considerations which either threaten to blur the ideal concept in the

author's mind or—in his anxiety to keep it clear and the consequent haste of fastening it on the paper—they often lead to imperfect graphic demonstration. How far this imperfection will be lessened depends upon the care the author bestows *subsequently* upon his manuscript. This, however—I may say—differs with every author, and in this matter some of our best masters have been the most careless. The idolaters of the letter (which, on good authority, "killeth"); those who, for reasons not too far to seek, decline to look beyond the letter; those pious folk say that it is just in the writing where the masters of music have shown their greatness. Ah no, dear brethren! it was in the soaring power of their fancy, in the depth of their feeling, in their expansive grasp upon life, in the nobility and grandeur of their concepts—and not in their musical grammar, syntax, and orthography.

The discrepancy between the artist and the clerical craftsman in the same person is often very marked and, indeed, the greater the artist the harder he finds it sometimes to make the craftsman in him keep pace with the artist.

At this point we must make a digression in order to guard against unfit comparisons and false parallels. With regard to the visual demonstration of his imaginings the composer must not be likened to the painter, sculptor, or architect, all of whom would be utter failures if their powers of demon-

stration were inadequate to convey the creations of their mind. The graphic artists are their own interpreters; no one stands between their thoughts and the public. The composer's work, on the other hand, remains as mute as a picture in the dark until the interpreter's skill reveals its message to us. This makes a most profound difference! The worker is the visual Arts whose handicraft is unable to express his idea is a bungler, for at his disposal is the whole world with its numberless forms and shapes from which he not only selects his models, but *to which, from their very inception, his ideas are inseparably attached.* The composer, on the other hand, molds into audible shapes only the psychic essences of life which he cannot tether to any commonly understood object (sky, plant, animal, windmill, etc.), and for which he can, on that account, find neither model nor hitching-post outside of the property-room of his own mind and memory. Since, however, there is hardly anything so difficult for our memory as to retain a mood; and as in this respect our memory is fickle even at its best; moreover, because the slightest wavering of the mood-*memory* changes the mood-*picture*, the sketching of its essential features has to be done in such haste and in so few lines, that we are obliged to search the composer's handiwork for its artistic meaning much more deeply than that of the graphic

artist. And, in turn, we have to be more lenient with the composer.

True, there are points of contact, of resemblance and even of equality, between the workers in the visual Arts and the composer—for in the last analysis all Art is one—but in this particular premise, in the greater separateness of the creation of a musical work from its demonstration in script, he differs from them and must, in consequence, be considered apart.

The conservative player assumes that the written image of a composition is *perfect* in every way. This assumption is both pious and righteous; but inasmuch as it implies that the composer has left nothing unsaid, nothing to ponder over, nothing to infer, it is also extremely—easy! It relegates the musical instrument to the level of the typewriting machine. The liberal interpreter takes the composer's script or print more in an indicative, intimating, suggesting sense and, having honestly searched for the ultimate musical meaning of the composition, he hesitates not to draw at times upon his larger instrumental experience to supply the auxiliaries of the composition with such little touches as will impart to them force, clarity, or whatever quality it may be that the composer's handicraft fell short of expressing. This occasional shortcoming is due to the fact that the composer's interpretative technic is seldom, if ever, as rich in

resources as that of the artistic interpreter—unless he happens to be also a virtuoso *hors ligne*, as was the exceptional case of Chopin, Liszt, and a very few others in the last century.

An interesting and rather amusing interchange of attitude between the conservatives and liberals takes place whenever the rights and privileges of the composer with regard to fixed rules and laws are touched upon. Here the conservative who renounced all freedom for himself, accords it to the composer in boundless measure. The strict constitutionalist becomes an advocate of absolutism! —and in such a degree as to respect and revere even the most flagrant misspellings and misprints as evidences of genius. Not so the liberal; he stands on his constitutional rights! He believes that every sincere work of Art carries its own laws of development in the very thought-germs from which it sprung, and though he also regards the composer as the ordainer of his own laws, he demands that this lawmaker "*keep* his self-made laws"—as Burton says—unless he shows good reason for suspending them! He insists that the author, having stated the enunciation of a motive in a certain way, shall abide by this unless he consciously purposes a *variante*, which is easily distinguishable from a slipshod reiteration.

The composer deals directly, not with the audience, but with the interpreter, and the trained mind of

the latter can safely be assumed to meet the composer's intention with a fair degree of understanding and even with divination. But the interpreter deals with an audience! In the themes and motives of a composition he has to represent clearly defined and easily distinguishable types, the recurrence of which an intelligent auditor must be enabled to recognize instantly, for these recurrences are the supreme medium of conveying a composition to the auditor's mind and they require—especially in their earlier reiterations or when the reiterations are infrequent—the closest possible resemblance to their previous manner of presentation.

It is here that the contest between conservatives and liberals is bitterest. The one recognizes no law to bridle the composer's caprice, to amend his negligence, or to correct his mistakes. The other reflects that the composer is human; that his pen may slip; that he is prone to make a slight change in his script (without intending it) whenever he neglects to look up his previous statement, and that any trained musician with a modicum of artistic feeling can distinguish with fair certainty whether the change was intended, esthetically conditioned, dynamically needed, or required for necessary variety's sake. If the change was unintentional, however, he feels empowered to give the composer a friendly nudge and say to him: "You made a little mistake here. You did not previously order

just this articulation of this phrase. I understand perfectly that you coin your own words and that you may pronounce your self-coined words as you please. But you must stick to your pronunciation if you wish people to understand what you mean!" And he unhesitatingly reëstablishes the original version. For it is much more important that the audience should recognize a previously stated motive at its recurrence than that the composer's pen should be proclaimed infallible.

A pertinent illustration of this may be found in Beethoven's Sonata Op. 14, No. 1, where the second subject appears to consist of five *legato* notes, followed by six semi-staccatos which lead to a climax and a close with another four legato notes.

This change from *legato* to *semi-staccato* and back to *legato* is strikingly characteristic. Through its being flanked by the two legatos, this semi-staccato becomes the chiefest feature of the theme, because its melodic curve and its rhythm—while, of course, not commonplace—are very simple. Through this *semi-staccato* the theme receives something like an intermittent reaching for a height, something like a gasping for breath, which an uninterrupted *legato* could never impart to it. Yet, in the immediately following reiteration in the bass, Beethoven leaves

this strongest feature out and marks the entire phrase *legato*. Why? Did he mean to heighten its effect dynamically? If so, he surely chose the contrary road. Or did he, perhaps, mean to vary the appearance of the theme at its very first reiteration? That would have been an esthetic blunder which Beethoven (of all men) could never consciously commit. But if we assume that he just forgot to put the same dots under the second slur that stand under the first, we put an end to all doubt and still do no more than he would have done had anybody called his attention to it. The whole matter seems minute and of but little importance to the composition, but it makes a difference to the player, and from this difference the auditor's understanding will derive considerable assistance.

Such cases of palpable—hush! what shall we call them!—well, they are by no means infrequent in the best piano-literature. It should have been the task of the makers of "editions" to correct them, but they have not always done so. Perhaps they did not notice them and perhaps they were of the class of hero-worshippers who worship the wrong quality in their hero. Is it, in this case, not far more reasonable to consider that this Sonata is an early work; that it is of a cheerful, jovial, and not very emotional character; and that it furnishes no ground for suspecting mysteries that a good musician cannot easily solve?

Another matter in which the artistic interpreter should be allowed a free hand concerns the ever-recurring trouble about the embellishments in antique music. To start with, we must remember that the various turns, mordents, pralltrillers, upwards and downwards, curlycues and whirligigs, were purely a matter of fashion and that this fashion arose from the feeble, quickly vanishing tone and the extremely small dynamic range of the whilom harpsichords and clavichords. Still, the antique masters themselves, in wise appreciation of the mutability of fashion, left us no hard and fast rules for the execution of their little "manners," as they called them. It was the much smaller successors of the old giants who—*horribile dictu*—"systematized" the embellishments! And they did not say, as the masters would have said, "you *may*"; no, they said, "you *must* do this or that in this way and only in this way."

Now, we do not revere our ancestors because of their costumes. We regard the portrait of Washington with respect not because but in spite of his powdered wig and queue. Our respect is based upon our gratitude for those of his achievements which have retained their value to *us*, however often the fashions have changed since his day. It is the same with antique music. What we admire in the "Well-tempered" is the unassailable originality, the melodic beauty, the refined selection and disposition of

harmony, the wealth of rhythms, the variety and clarity of forms, the consummate contrapuntal mastery—in short, all those qualities which we would admire just as much in a composer of to-day, were there one who possessed them. We bow to its *permanent*, but not its *temporary* truths. To rank the thousand and one little gewgaws—these merest concessions to fashion—among the enduring truths in those old works of Art is a grievous error.

It is true that there are occasions in certain melodies where an embellishment is called for by reasons higher than fashion; where, so to speak, it forms part of the melody; where its omission would make the phrase either bare, blunt or prosy. There are also embellishments needed to imply (or affect?) the historic style; but for this debatable purpose a very few of them will suffice and in many pieces—(yes, dear reader, even by John Sebastian!)—a goodly number of them may safely be omitted. A glance at any slow movement by Bach, say, the fine, poetic Andante from the Italian Concerto, will find this view supported. The very first note, that long drawn out *A*, standing like a pillar that supports a fine sweep of arched structure filled with the finest lace-like tracery emerging from the pillar; it should not be marred by the flippant mordent which caps it. The mordent is—on the modern piano—offensive to good taste. When Master Sebastian wrote it down it was not offensive,

because on the old clavichord this mordent resembled a mere *vibrato* (as we hear it—only too often—on stringed instruments) and it had the effect of adding both length and intensity to this initial tone; but on the modern pianoforte its effect is precisely the opposite.

Some people go so far in their adoration of these little frills and flounces as to demand that antique music should not be played at all upon our modern pianoforte; that instruments of the style contemporaneous to the compositions should be built and learned. Perhaps so. Let us see. The feeble tone would demand a smaller hall; this would not hold enough people to pay the printing expenses—but let us skip *that.* The small hall, in its turn, would not harmonize with the glare of electric light; but —never mind—we will get oil lamps! Now think of this environment, of this *milieu,* a small hall decorated rococo, illumined by oil lamps, on the stage a spinet or clavichord and in the midst of it all—a man in modern evening dress! An impossibility, a shock, an esthetic outrage:—But there's a way out—let the pianist don the rococo costume. Alas—would not this seem a bit theatrical? Would it not lower the dignity of a concert or recital? Assuredly! Then there should remain nothing for it except that the audience, too, appear *en costume* and—the farce were complete.

As to the preservation of historical truth in Art—

I have yet to see it. The paintings of the old masters as well as of more recent painters fairly teem with anachronisms and are, nevertheless, great works of Art. The historical drama is historically never quite true. Neither is the historical novel. And, what is more, there are some very enlightened people who question seriously whether history itself is always true. At any rate this matter of historical truth in *Art*, its needfulness or irrelevancy, the difficulty in obtaining, verifying, proving it in matters of applied Art, is a very long chapter and one which is somewhat remote from this discussion. We may be satisfied with the slight touch of it that bears upon the author's authority regarding the embellishments in antique music. It may not be amiss, however, to mention here by way of comparison that the literary world seems to be far less captious than the musical, for there are many old works of literature that have been transcribed into more modern forms of their original language (Chaucer, Wolfram von Eschenbach, the Edda, and others) without laying the transcriber open to the charge of heresy or vandalism.

Possibly my advocacy of discretionary powers for the interpreter may sooner or later be met with the trite question: "Where will you draw the line?" If so, I should offer two separate replies. First, "Never mind about the line. If you are really and intimately familiar with the style of writing of the

master whose work you are to play, you may safely rely on your good sense to prevent you from extending your privilege of discretion to that degree where it will injure the composition." Secondly, I should take my rights as an American citizen to answer by a counter-question. I would open, say, the "Kreisleriana," point at the first number; at the first measure and at the entire first part. There we find the general remark "Pedal." Vague as this is, let us assume that Schumann had in mind a change of Pedal with every bass note. We find also that the bass is written, relatively speaking, in somewhat long notes, every second of which Schumann took pains to tie over into the next measure. Yet, we find these selfsame, long-pedalled basses supplied with *staccato dots*. How can I reconcile these conflicting orders without consulting my own judgment and without the exercise of freedom with discretion?

That I am not altogether impervious to such gentle hints from a composer as he addresses rather to the imagination than to the technic, a kindly disposed reader may infer from the suggestion made in regard to Beethoven's Sonata Op. 14. But when by a plain contradiction between the employed terms such hints lead into downright confusion—as in the case of the Kreisleriana (selected from an astonishingly large number)—I am compelled to set the author's authority aside and rely upon my own judgment.

It will be some consolation to the reader to know that my plea is not altogether new so far as it concerns the limitations of the author's authority. The reconstruction of phrases which, on account of the small compass of their keyboard, had to be crippled by earlier writers, is now generally accepted. If we reflect, however, that it was not only the narrow compass (of pitch) that limited the earlier pianos, but also an exceedingly small scale of shade-variety; if we admit to ourselves—as, in fairness, we must—that the progress (in tone-quality, mechanism, keyboard extension, durability) of the modern piano has been called forth by the ever-growing demands the virtuoso made upon the piano; and that he made these demands because he has continually added to the store of technical means of expression—we cannot evade the conclusion that the pianist of to-day is able to put into sounding reality many things in the works of our masterly forebears—whose genius builded so much better than they knew—which they hardly dared to imagine. Since such realizations, however, involve the employment of technical means that were unknown to the old masters, we must not hesitate to resort to these means.

The artist that has the courage to do this will run no risk of displeasing an earnest and competent critic, for the changes he makes consciously—and conscientiously—will but emphasize his familiarity

with the intentions of the composer, while this familiarity, in its turn, begets a love for the master which will prevent impious meddling.

It is, however, not only in such relatively small matters as an occasional embellishment, slur, dot, or crippled phrase, that the author's authority is limited; with regard to the general conception of a composer's work on the part of the interpreter this limitation becomes still more apparent.

Not to confine the discussion exclusively to the piano we may take the broader scope of a Symphony for the orchestra, and we shall find that even here the author's ideas—as the individual conductor understands them—require the technical assistance of the interpreter. Let me illustrate by a not altogether fictitious case.

The Symphony Orchestra—the city shall be nameless—played the Fifth Symphony by Beethoven. It was the first performance of this work under a new conductor. Well—he "did things." He took the last movement broader than we had heard it before. He gave it not so much as an outbreak of joy, but rather as a hymn of joy; brilliant, impressive, but rather grandiose. In the well-known horn motive he doubled the horns and made them turn the funnels upwards, so as to bring out the fine, folksong-like motive more strongly. He phrased the first movement more clearly than we had heard it before. In short, he did a great many things

which pleased me thoroughly and over which my conservative friends were highly incensed. Letting them speak first, I may quote: "It wasn't Beethoven! Beethoven didn't want four horns! Beethoven didn't mean the last movement to be an ode to joy, but *joy* itself! Beethoven wrote the metronome mark at 84, not—as the conductor took it—at 72! It was an 'interesting experiment,' but certain things should be held too sacred for experimenting! The phrasing of the first movement broke up the fluency, the continuity of the structure; it was vivisection!"

With all of which I heartily and profoundly disagreed. But this does not prevent me from thinking that the conservative element is both wholesome and necessary in a musical community to counterbalance the Liberals who are easily inclined to abuse the legitimate liberty of the interpreter so much as to become impious meddlers with things which, after all, ought to be held sacred. My retort to the aforesaid criticism would be by no means that it is altogether wrong. I should only charge it with a high degree of exaggeration, and nothing more, because from a conservative point of view the conductor did violate Beethoven.

The Liberal, however, asks himself, What is "Beethoven?" What do we, what can we, know about him and his spirit, beyond the thoughts he confided to the many-staffed paper? And as we trace these

powerful thoughts and see plainly how much his expression was restricted by the lack of chromatic instruments, by the paucity of orchestral force, technic and skill—shall we persist in an exact reproduction of his means and relegate the modern orchestra to a sort of phonograph? Should we not preferably read between the lines and put into sounding reality what we think he *meant* to say? Should we not, in extolling the grandeur of his thoughts, employ all the richness of the modern orchestra rather than prevent the present generation from hearing one iota more in Beethoven than did our forefathers? Do we not employ the skill of modern oratory in interpreting the Good Book from the pulpit? Does not the modern painter portray the Saviour according to his modern conception? Have we not abandoned the stilted, scanning style of declamation prevalent in dramatic performances contemporaneous with Shakespeare? Do all actors play Hamlet alike? And why do they not? On the other hand, why should they? We know the "story" of Hamlet, what little there is of it, and we are not at all curious to know whether Mr. A, B or C can or cannot remember the lines and go through the traditional motions. What we do want to see and hear is whether Mr. A, B or C saw *more* in Hamlet than we have seen; and how Hamlet was mirrored in *his* brain. So it is with the C minor Symphony, to return to our medium of

illustration. We know what Theodore Thomas' autocratic mind saw in it. We know how much more Leopold Damrosch, his great contemporary, saw in it, even though he was much less of an orchestral disciplinarian. We have heard it played under the batons of more recent conductors. Each one differed from the other, and if the difference was not caused by plebeian tricks but by the honest conception of a well-trained mind, did not the difference lend additional interest to the performances?

I well understand the sweet pleasure which a traditional performance gives us. To hear what we know so well; to hear it as we were wont to hear it, gratifies our memory; it reawakens in our soul half-forgotten feelings; it brings back old times; the power of association asserts itself in and through the music; our thoughts wander back to the time "when we were twenty-one," and thus, step by step, the enjoyment of the symphony recedes from its purely musical plane until, finally, the sounds assume a rôle which the glowing embers of a cozy wood fire could play just as well. Surely, the appeal of such a traditional performance to the musical mind is not nearly so stimulating as when we hear the old works embodying a new meaning—a meaning that is applicable to the life of our own, present time.

Moreover, what do our conservative friends mean

by a traditional performance? Surely no more than what they heard when they were young. But if they think that these performances were anything like those of Beethoven's days, they are grossly in error. I knew a dear, lovable old man who for many years conducted one of Germany's best orchestras. When I was a boy he was a blond-haired man in his prime, and I well remember how he overthrew one tradition after another that his predecessors had established; I remember how tactfully and gently he expressed himself about the "old fogies." And now? He has retired, and new men play the old symphonies. How he now deplores "the waning of all understanding for Beethoven"—and uses almost the same words with regard to his successors which his predecessors applied to him. 'Twas ever thus. The old is right, the new is wrong, because it will, as Shakespeare has it, "commit the oldest sins the newest kinds of ways."

After all, a child of the brain differs little from any other child. So long as it stays at home, in the composer's desk, its powers are put to no test. That process starts when it leaves home and goes forth into the world, engraved and printed. Then it has, so to speak, to earn its living. Some of these brain-children succeed brilliantly, but only for a while; others have a hard struggle at first, but finally become what we short-lived humans mean by

"immortal." Why do some die while the others live on? Is it a mere toss of a penny? Mere chance? Surely not! Those which die, *had* to die because they spoke only to their generation and time. The others are of sturdier fiber. The times pass before them with their ever-changing *Zeitgeist*, and yet they stand. Their worth was recognized by the light of candles and oil lamps; gas light revealed but new charms in them, and still more beauties are disclosed by electric light. *An old work that cannot stand the interpretation in the spirit of a new time is ripe for the archeological museum.* Only when its truths *remain* true in the light of, and application to, our time—only then can an old work claim our attention (outside of the class-room), for only then it has vitality. If it resists the new conception —it is *dead!* And that is why some works of undoubted but transient merit die.

To return, in parting, to the piano, I would ask any pianist to try the experiment of playing a composition by Gade, Hummel, Moscheles, Sterndale Bennett, in a modern spirit. Does not the very idea make you smile? But why? These composers were masterly writers in their day. Yet you smile—because you feel distinctly that their works have nothing more to tell us and that *for this reason* they do not admit of any but the traditional interpretation. The infusion of a new spirit, of a new or heightened meaning, would make them sound in-

Property of
Bethany College
Library

congruous, absurd. There we may accept the author's authority; but when we deal with the great prophets, with those inspired minds in whose works the tread of centuries leaves no trace of wear, we must claim the privilege of the living to administer their priceless heirloom as we are prompted by our love, admiration and conscience.

The author's authority—forsooth!

DOES MUSIC DESCRIBE?

DOES MUSIC DESCRIBE?

In contemplating a special branch of art there occurs not infrequently the error of regarding it entirely *per se*, as an art, and not as one of the forms or branches of art. Literary persons sometimes claim that the esthetic principles which govern painting, for instance, must not be applied to *belles lettres*, and *vice versa*. This is an error; for art is one, and its various forms differ only in the mode of manifestation. Hence it scarcely requires special mention that any general or fundamental principle which is true in one branch of art must be true in all its branches.

Looking at the question from this broader standpoint, it may be well to inquire into the position which the element of description holds in art. This is necessary because there seems to be a veiled suggestion in the much discussed question which implies the comparison, "Does music describe as well as other arts?"

What part, therefore, does exactness of description really play in the merits of an art-work?

Let us look at a good oil portrait, painted by a master, and representing somebody we know. It is a strong likeness, no doubt, and yet we scarcely ever saw the person look exactly like the picture. Why? Because the artist did not paint his man as

he looked at any particular moment (any photographer could do that), but studied the various traits of his character as expressed in the face, hands, etc., and then made a sort of composite picture *of an entire life-period*, giving due prominence to the predominating moods, and indicating others more delicately. The artist—who may modify some harsh line, omit a discoloration, idealize, and all that, and still retain a likeness—rises above mere material resemblance, and *suggests* to our minds things which, however seemingly inseparable from matter, are nevertheless incorporeal, non-material. Let us look at the great descriptions of travel. What do we find?—the exact height of a mountain? the lowest depth of a river? the precise architectural arrangement of a village or city? Why, if these material minutiæ constituted literary merit, Baedeker's guide-books would be the greatest achievements of descriptive literature! If in a book on hand we find these things at all, they are merely incidental; what imparts the real value to travel descriptions of literary merit, is the author's mental and emotional activity called forth by the mountains and rivers, their relation to humanity, their mood, their character—the non-material, incorporeal part; and only by the aid of these non-material things can the author produce the illusion in his readers that they have actually been in the described place, that they have seen it themselves. Yes, only through

things incorporeal, intangible—but how may the intangible be described? It may, in truth, not be described; but by illustration, metaphor, symbol and whatever means make up the craft of literary art, it may be *suggested* to a mind that is receptive and conversant with its terminology.

This is precisely the point upon which our question hinges. Some say, "music does describe." Some say, "it does not." Both are wrong, and would probably be willing to compromise on the amendment that music, like all art, *suggests*.

Surely every composer writes with the conscious or unconscious intention of conveying emotion, and emotion is based upon imagination. Now, imagination need not fully emancipate itself from things material; it is like the prism, through which a beam of white sunlight passes, and through which, by refraction, it is transformed into all the colors of the rainbow. Imagination dips into the flowers of reality to extract their incorporeal fragrance; it occupies itself with things material to extract from them their non-material attributes—and thus it feeds our emotion.

This brings the answer to the question, "Does music describe?" It does, for it suggests; and suggestion is a thing of unlimited power, which may lack the definiteness of actual description, but may act with far greater force. As to the title of a music-piece it is a matter of taste and inclination of the com-

poser whether, by entitling his composition, he will give our imagination a definite direction, or whether he shall prefer to let us choose our own objects from which to extract our emotional feast.*

It might also be said that any art which describes must be able to make its description so clear as to be understood without explanation; that appears reasonable, and yet, take up any illustrated book, try to infer from the illustrations, even in the most general way, what they mean, and see what a dismal failure you will make! I remember having in my early boyhood seen a picture by Doré, illustrating the Brocken Scene in Goethe's "Faust." It was before I had read that work, and to me this picture conveyed absolutely nothing; for I saw only a lot of nude female figures flying in mid air without wings, in their midst a goat also flying without wings. In short, the whole picture was absolutely nonsensical and incongruous to me, and it was not until five years later, after I had read Goethe's "Faust," that it dawned upon me that the picture referred to the Brocken Scene. A very similar experience was with the celebrated picture (I forget

* It is well known that there exist two different views among musicians on this subject, so different that the adherents to these views may almost be classified as two parties. There are those who believe in absolute music, and those who believe in program music, or descriptive music; yet when we look a little closer at the two parties, from Gluck, Rameau and Bach to Wagner and Brahms, we find that the division has no existence in reality, for every one of these masters has written music of both classes; some could be termed "absolute" music, and also some "program" music; so, by appealing to their authorities, we should not gain much.

who painted it) of Queen Mary Stuart's last moments. I saw a lady weeping, surrounded by a great many other weeping women, and a somewhat elderly gentleman kneeling before her; and, while the coloring of the picture may have pleased my eyes, I failed utterly to understand what it was, because I was too young to know anything about the hapless Queen of Scots. Now both these pictures contained human figures, which could be perfectly understood, and yet these pictures were a perfect blank to me. This seems to prove that we have to know what the artist meant to convey, in order to understand his work; we have to judge the work from the artist's standpoint, and, if an art-work tells the story which its title indicates, its merits depend entirely upon how well it tells it.

Choose as a musical example Raff's "Forest Symphony." After we know the title, will it lead our imagination into the forest, into forest lore? Will it suggest to us the legend of the Wild Huntsman and his spectral retinue, the forest elves, and all the many characters connected with forest lore, by no other means than its title and music? or will it fail to do it? Now, if anybody can hear the "Forest Symphony," and be acquainted with its title, and say, after hearing it, that nothing of a romantically sylvan nature has been suggested to his imagination and to his mind, then I will admit that music does not describe. And if anyone hearing

the overture to the "Flying Dutchman," and, knowing the title, can fail to experience in his imagination the sensations of the maritime and the spectral, then music does not describe, and the "program musicians" are a set of chimera-hunters; but if the purposed suggestions come to our mind through these music-pieces, or if the suggestions conveyed by the title are by the subsequent music intensified to such a degree as to assume definite forms, and cause us to lose ourselves, to live with them, to feel with them, then music *does* describe. And if it does, the description occupies itself, not with any particular moment, as a *genre*-picture would, but with the emotional course of events, and with the motion of the subject, showing it in all its moods, while the graphic arts show only one. This advantage of music over the graphic arts is counterbalanced by a lack of definiteness of outline; but for the purely emotional phase with which music occupies itself the definiteness of outline is of no consequence. The absence of definite outline, however, has led to the argument that a music-piece may describe something different to every hearer; but I meet that argument by what I said of the necessity of knowing the title; besides, the same argument can be brought to bear upon any book, any statue, any picture. What commentaries, and how many different ones, have not been written on Goethe's "Faust," on "Hamlet," on the "Venus

of Milo" and the "Angelus" by Millet—hundreds, if not thousands, of them! Does that not show that a book, a statue, a picture, may also mean something different to every beholder? But what of it? The circumstance that an artistic illustration may fit more than one subject does not seem to me to be of any consequence. It seems simply to show the capability of the art-work for stirring the imagination even beyond its purposed point. Besides, we must not forget that music has at its disposal quite a number of expressions which, by traditional use (hardly attributable to mere chance), have become definite types, types of such force of characterization that the world has accepted them as such. I could show a goodly list of such types which even children understand instinctively, but this particular matter is too large to find a place here. There is, however, a certain aspect of "descriptiveness" which is only too often disregarded by creative artists: it is the very definition of "art." Those who consider art to be merely a sort of refined "amusement" will probably protest against the definition as specifying the essence of art, but they should remember that the returns which art makes to the absorber are always exactly balanced with what he brings towards it in the way of appreciation, though this may be entirely instinctive, as it is in many cases.

Art, then, in its ultimate meaning, *is an expression*

of purely psychic processes, a reflex of soul-impressions. To put a landscape or a human figure upon the canvas as a mere imitation of the original does not require the heart-guided hand of an artist; a mere craftsman can do it, not to mention chemico-mechanical processes; but the result thus obtained must ever remain a mere "imitation," it can never rise to the dignity of an "interpretation." Now, the more an artist persists in such minutiæ as do not bear directly upon the *feeling* which the subject has aroused in him, the less of an "interpreter"—i.e., of an artist—he is. For in order to produce a work of art he must, disregarding all that is psychically inessential, concentrate his efforts upon the *spiritual* quality of his subject. This is particularly true of musical composition. It can express the heroic, but it can describe neither Hannibal nor Cæsar in particular; it can express the idyllic, but it can describe neither Daphnis nor Aucassin. Hence, whenever a composer ventures into the portraying of particular persons or events his work is bound to suffer as a work of art because it trespasses upon a domain of description that belongs to a different branch of art.

It is quite true that our feelings are so closely interwoven with our life-experiences that, when listening to music, we can scarcely refrain from connecting the feelings it roused in us with some particular event, character or experience which the magic

of music has brought to our mind;—true, but this associating process must ever remain the privilege of *the auditor*, not of the composer; for, if he ignores this privilege and usurps it for himself, he cannot avoid violating the esthetic form and the very coherence of his work.

The test of a piece of descriptive music will—and must—be, that *without* the descriptive program it still remains a piece of good, intelligible *music;* just as a portrait, though a "speaking likeness," must be a good, artistic painting, and as a book on travel description must be orderly in the sequence of thought and show good diction to be respected as good literature. It is in this premise where many composers, as well as the artists in other branches, sin only too often and cause many a sincere auditor —or spectator—to doubt his own intelligence instead of blaming the misguided composer for his failure to understand the ethics of his art.

To sum up: Music as well as any other art does describe, because it suggests, only that it has its own province of descriptive suggestion. And to demand of music a definite outline of "Things" is as unfair as to demand the poetry of color from sculpture, or an eye-feast from literature. Each art has its domain of description, or suggestion, or of emotional utterance (whichever of these designations you may prefer). If one and the same subject were given to a painter, a sculptor, a writer

and a composer, each one would portray that phase of it for which his particular form of art is best qualified; and the musician infringes upon no exclusive right of literature if he employs onomatopœia with good taste and dignity in his description. But—and this is a big "but"—as to such a description as would instruct or inform the Bœotian (if such an intimation were lurking behind our harmless-looking question), there is no such thing in art, neither in literature nor in painting and, of course, not in music either.

To be understood, the language of music must be learned, and this applies, of course, to any language. If we confine our desires to no more than an understanding of its messages, how fortunate that the "learning" of music's language draws neither upon our conscious reasoning, our clerical work, nor upon any other personal exertion. The merest listening to it, frequently and attentively repeated, is sufficient to familiarize us with the vocabulary of its idealized speech; sufficient, at least, to extract from it our personal measure of spiritual gratification.

NATIONAL MUSIC AND THE NEGRO

NATIONAL MUSIC AND THE NEGRO

In our symphony concerts and grand operas, even in the entr'acte music of our better theatres, in all music of a public character, we have reached a level on which we need no longer fear comparison with Europe—not, at least, as far as it relates to the largest cities of our country. It is true that we still import most of our players and singers from Europe, but that is a matter for separate discussion; its relation to the present subject is too remote and would, needlessly, lead us far afield. Although the number of musical centers is larger on the European continent and therefore the distribution of musical appreciation more even than it is here, we may take the constantly growing number of large legitimate orchestras, and the increasing interest of the public in such organizations, as an unmistakable indication that Music in America will in this respect, too, soon be the equal of Music in Europe.

There is, however, a difference between "Music in America" and "American Music." This difference does not seem to be quite understood by those who have at heart the creative side of Music in America. Let it be well understood that the music of this country—and this statement is meant to comprise all types of music—is quite as good as any which Europe has had to show since death arrested the pen

of Brahms and Tchaikovsky. This may mean much or little, according to the point of view of the observer, but it is certain that, with regard to inventiveness and skill, the American composer of high-class music leaves little or nothing to be desired.

In the face of these facts it must seem strange that up to the present day no work of high artistic value, written on our side of the ocean, has become popular among ourselves. It will not do to account for this fact by the toplofty explanation that high-class music is never popular. For in the meaning of the word as used here, many great works are thoroughly popular; e.g., Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Wagner's music-dramas, Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique," and many other large works, as well as an infinite number of smaller vocal and instrumental solo pieces of high merit. Appreciation, therefore, is by no means wanting, and as the inventiveness and skill of our composers are likewise evident, the public's persistent refusal to award the crown of popularity to a domestic composition seems to suggest that some important element must be missing in it. This element can be no other than the ethnic or national note, the local touch; that touch which, for instance, after a protracted siege of Italian Opera awakened the German people to their musical self-respect at the first hearing of Weber's "Freischütz"; that note which,

reaching past and beyond the lover or connoisseur of music in us, should address us as *Americans;* that would reëcho our typical mode of thinking, our ethics, our spirit of freedom, the magnitude of our enterprises, the breadth of our humaneness, the uniquely dignified position of our women, the mixture of races composing so large a part of our population—not to speak of the tender note of love, which, though common to all humanity, has yet a slightly different sound in every country. The number of elements distinguishing our national life from that of other peoples is very large, and the briefest glance into the variety and details of individual careers here makes this number appear practically endless.

Why, then, has the ethnographic note of America not been sounded? It is because that element in our complex population which possesses this note most distinctly, belongs to a different race. On this account has the ethnical significance of that element been overlooked. It is, in other words, because the negro is black! Our musical custodians have, however, completely overlooked the circumstance that the negro, though of a different race, is, nevertheless, a social ingredient here quite as numerous and as close to us as is the Hebrew; the negro is a constituent not only numerically important, but also historically and as regards his problematic political position. Not only has the negro been the

cause of the greatest war in our history* and of the most serious and most painful division of sentiment this nation has ever experienced; not only is he a highly characteristic and striking line in the picture of American life, but—and this is the essential point of his importance for music—he also, more than any other type, represents among us the element of human lowliness, of humility, of suffering. That these elements are, at the same time, the art-generating forces in national bodies, is a verity no longer open to dispute; and since the negro among us is the exponent *par excellence* of these elements, the logical sequence is obvious.

It may be necessary, however, to meet at this point a possible iteration of the academic slogan: "Art has no country!" While the young art-student learns the rudiments of his art he cannot discern the ethnic traits in the masterworks he studies, nor should he be permitted to consider these traits while devoting his time to the absorption of general principles common to the arts of all occidental nations. After having mastered the craft underlying his art, however, he should be led to realize that there exists no art-work of any renown which is not pronouncedly ethnic. Of course, high art does not stop at the ethnic point any more than at the point of mere sensuous beauty, but it should—and

*Written before 1917.

always does—touch this point. Michel Angelo's "Last Judgment," for instance, does not refer to any particular geographical spot; yet it speaks plainest to the Italian. It is thoroughly Italian, not only as to School, technic and dramatic style of composition, but also—and especially—in sentiment. Common to all lands as is the association of maternal love with sanctity, Raphael's Madonna of "San Sisto" does not attune the heart of any one to filial tenderness (allied to and alloyed with religious sentiment) in quite the same degree as that of an Italian, because in addition to all that is expressed in those pure and lovely features the Italian recognizes in this Madonna also his *compatriot*. She is an Italian despite history and Bible. Murillo's Madonna is a Spanish woman. Holbein, though strongly influenced by Flemish and Italian art, painted his Madonna as a German woman. The scenes of Hamlet, Othello, Shylock, Romeo, Cæsar, and many others of Shakespeare's dramas are not laid in England, but Shakespeare is, nevertheless, the most English of English poets. The aggregate of foreign hearts his Muse has stirred may far outnumber the British ones; still, he will ever say more to the intelligent Englishman than to the son of any other soil; ay, even more, I believe, than to an American, though he speaks the same language.

It is the same with Bach, Beethoven, Schumann,

Chopin, Boieldieu, Verdi—in short, with all the great masters of music. As we notice the mixture of French and Polish sentiment (predominantly the latter) in Chopin, as we observe in Verdi the preponderance of sensuous charm of melody, peculiar to Italy, so we cannot fail to recognize the German in Beethoven. It is quite true that he spoke a universal language and that this language is fairly well understood in all lands where occidental music is cultivated. But deeper down, behind and beyond the profound thought and its masterly expression, there pulsates in Beethoven's music a life with which the German feels the touch and affinity of kinship; he feels the blood of his blood; he sympathizes with its minutest agitation by sentiment, for it is like unto his own. And of all Germans again, the Viennese feels this intimate touch most deeply, for there is hardly an Allegro in Beethoven's works that does not more or less distinctly reëcho the patriarchal times, the gay spirit, the unique street-song of Old Vienna. Does not also that other art-miracle, the Song of Schubert, plainly reveal the place of its cradle?

Tchaikovsky has expressed his modern thoughts in thoroughly classic forms. Here we find Russian thoughts in German forms (for the form of the Symphony is German), and yet none acquainted with the psychic traits of Russia can fail to recognize his work as Russian.

Gade and Grieg were Scandinavians and were, after all, only twenty-seven years apart in age. Of the two, Gade was by far the greater master of form, if not also of counterpoint. Where is his music today, and why has it vanished? Because it was music from nowhere in particular. Grieg, on the other hand, wrote Scandinavian Music. The spirit of the Norse Saga, of Peter Dass, Holberg, and so on up to Ibsen, Björnsen and Strindberg, speaks out of it. Norse landscape is reflected in it. His music is not only fine, clever, noble—for such was Gade's music, too—but it is also *rooted in the soil of a definite locality; it is genuinely ethnic!*

Paradox as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that in the violent storm of opposition which Wagner had to face and conquer he found his most helpful—though, of course, unconscious—ally in Meyerbeer. Had the latter's art struck but one note suggesting where its home was, Wagner would perhaps not have found recognition while he lived. But despite its great theatrical cleverness, brilliant orchestration and much that was novel in it, Meyerbeer's music was a hybrid, a mongrel of French piquancy, German solidity (or rather an affectation of it) and Hebrew sentimentalism. It had no home. It spoke no language with its primordial accent. It reflected no life-theory, no history, no landscape. Wagner's art, on the other hand, voiced all these. And this it was that gave it the stanp of *genuineness.* For

when an art-work is true *somewhere*, it carries its stamp of genuineness all over the world, though its ethnic element might not even be understood outside of its own country.

Now, after the great masters in all branches of art have in their works revealed the ethnic note and thereby proved it to be essential, it may be so accepted; there remains then only to point out on which key of the social keyboard it is to be looked for. We know that the folk-song of a nation forms the basis of its Art Music. But "folk-song" is a word of many meanings. It may be a song that antedates our modern musical notation, as does the quaint song of German night-watchmen (still used in many small German cities) which Wagner introduced into his "Meistersinger." Thus the folk-song may have come to us through purely oral tradition or it may be of more recent origin and yet be one of those things which, like Topsy, "just growed"—and there are such in America—or its author may be known and he may have struck the home-note with such force of truth that the people of the land accepted it and made it their own (as Silcher's "Lorelei" in Germany and Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" in our country); and those people of the land who thus established the folk-song, whatever country we may think of, always and everywhere belong to that class which we designate as the lowly, the humble, the suffering.

As a nation we Americans are not sufferers. Our prosperity has been seldom, and never long, interrupted. We are politically free in a measure the world has never known before. We are strong and wealthy as a nation, almost beyond reasonable necessity. We are quick, clever, alert, intelligent. All of which is very fine and (who knows?) perhaps better than the possession of a National Art. Our millionaire does not feel the absence of a national art. He obtains his *objets d'art* from Europe, as he does his musicians; and the rest of us, why, we have always the "free libraries," you know, and need not complain. But if we recollect the words of Scott in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel": "Breathes there a man with soul so dead"; if we look into any book of musical aphorisms and contemplate the thoughts on national art expressed by all great thinkers from Confucius to Herbert Spencer, we find that National Art, and especially National Music, is, after all, not a mere court-plaster beauty-spot on the well-fed cheek of a nation, not an effete luxury, but a serious necessity for the constructive force of national feeling, of national sentiment. It is a discipline of emotion, a heart education to the ignorant, a stimulus to the callous, a delight to the educated, an inspiration to the patriot, a solace to the sufferer, a hope to the humane. The inspiration of reverence for, and pride in, the departed heroes of its nation, which the native child and youth receives from

national monuments, ripens into patriotic resolution and deed through the living sound of national music. It is not necessary to explain why the germs of a national music must come from the suffering, for we know that the song of joy is quickly sung, while the epic of grief has many cantos. If we now seek out him who was, and in many respects still is, the sufferer among us, whom do we find? Is it the laborer? He is better paid than elsewhere. Is it the throng of foreign immigrants who know not even the language of the country? Who, then, is there in this country that is at all comparable to the Russian serf of old or the German peasant of feudal times? Who is it that despite the best of education cannot—and perhaps should not—rise to the birthrank of a white man? The Chinese? He carries his wall with him wherever he goes, as the Britisher does with his island. Is it the Indian, the "noble" red man? His proportion to the population is homeopathic, and were it not for history-lessons, pleasure travel, and Cooper's "Leather Stocking," our youngsters would scarcely know him, because the tendency of his life has been *to keep him aloof from our civilization.* He does not wait at our table. His wife does not nurse our babies. He is not a part of our household, a part of our daily environment, of our life. But the negro answers to all of these requirements. He is a prominent trait in the physiognomy of this country and however

unbridgeable the chasm that may forever separate him from the white man *socially*, whatever degree of darkness his skin may show, he is a *fact* and a factor in the lives of all our people; a characteristic and interesting factor who—by the way—is much dearer to our white man than he seems to admit to himself.

In the place of amusement where the mask of conventional formality is shaken off by laughter and where " 'tis proper for a man to laugh," the white man greets the negro on the stage with a familiarity which casts a strong and favorable light upon the present argument. There is no figure in the play that looks as familiar to him, be he rich or poor, young or old, as does the "coon"; no song appeals as quickly and pathetically to the white American of any class or educational degree as does the negro song, the plantation melody, with its weird, strange plaintiveness. It has been said that many of these melodies were written by white men, but this, far from being an argument against the thought expressed here, rather favors it, for it shows how deeply interested the white man must have been in the negro to be capable of uttering the latter's sentiments so well that he took the white man's voice for his own—and the public fully concurred with him. The negro is not

> . . . . of those who never sing,
> But die with all their music in them.

In his song he speaks out without restraint, free, crude, clumsily, perhaps even harshly at times, but also *genuinely* as the cry of an animal, primordial, forceful, definite, and as he is the only one among us who can afford to do so, it must logically be he who lays the cornerstone to American Music.

Our composers should look into his store of melody, they should carefully study the raw material he furnishes, and in so doing they should leave the racial aspect of the matter entirely out of their thoughts. A careful study of the history of American slavery shows that pirates have contributed but a very small proportion to the American slave trade. The main supply came from Portugal, where (1402) five thousand low-caste negro men and women were accepted by Henry the Navigator as a ransom for fifty high-caste Moors. From 1402 until the middle of the sixteenth century these negro slaves lived and multiplied in Portugal. During these 150 years they lost their African language and their race memory and had, in exchange, learned to sing—purely by imitation, of course. In their original African home their semi-animal tribes had no song; they used only primitive instruments of percussion in conjunction with shouts and wails. What they learned to sing in Portugal were, of course, Portuguese songs.

Brazil is Portuguese in language and coinage to this day, as we know. When John III granted the

land in parcels of 50 miles to the Portuguese nobles, they brought their slaves with them to do the rough work of building, plowing, etc. It was these Portuguese nobles who introduced the traffic in slaves to the—then—English Colonies. Here the slaves, in time, lost their Portuguese language and, naturally, adapted their Portuguese melodies to the cadence of English speech which they had learned. The chiefest alterations made in the old melodies were those of rhythm, owing to the great difference between the cadence of Portuguese and English speech.

There is much more to be said on this point, but this brief historical sketch might suffice to remove the terrible odium from our negro melodies of being of African origin. The negro melody was "white" from the outset.

The delver into race mysteries* may herein find something like an explanation of the odd phenomenon that the negro's song strikes the white man here as most homelike and familiar. And this forms a reasonable and safe basis for the white man upon which to build his art-music. (The Russian school started in a similar way.) There is no cause for any resentment in this thought. As the negro's labor supplies the raw material to our cotton, sugar, and several other industries, we may as well use the crude

*E. J. Payne, *History of European Colonies;* R. G. Watson, *Spanish and Portuguese America;* R. Southey, *History of Brazil;* and others.

material of his song. And when we contemplate the vast amount of white-man's ingenuity, skill and refined taste that is ready to begin the work of creating a national art-music we have every reason to predict that the edifice of art erected by the Caucasian upon the clumsy but strong Ethiopian foundation will endear it to the people of our country and make it the wonder of the rest of the world.

The redemptive power of Art, of Music especially, is boundless. What the great thinkers of all ages have said of it, every earnest artist has put to the test of his own life in his own way, and found true. Music is, therefore, not limited to the domain of mere amusement, nor even to that wider realm which comprises the pleasures of higher order. It must be recognized that Music is a potent factor in the construction of human society. To be sure, Music does not formulate the laws of society, but it attunes the lawmaker's heart and mind to love of mankind, to fairness and equity, by arousing the best instincts in him. There is no phase of life so distant that the radiating warmth of Music may not reach it; and it would be strange, indeed, if the much mooted "negro problem" were the one and only exception. The harsh feelings, embittering the racial division, could surely be softened by the power of song. If the white man accepts the negro's song as a crude basis for his National Art, and if in

the white man's Symphony the black man should, here and there, feel a beat of his own pulse, he would surely be more inclined to accept for himself the place assigned to him by the friendly white man. Thus the chasm which separates the races would be bridged by a structure too airy for the foot to tread upon but yet strong enough for the heart to feel its presence. This bridge of song—it should be built! And, though it be no more substantial than the rainbow, its airy structure would in its significance be just as beautiful and strong a symbol of peace.

THE ARTIST AND HIS TALENT

THE ARTIST AND HIS TALENT

Deeply rooted among the noblest traits of the human heart is a feeling of reverence for virtue, learning and merit. No man, however ignorant, radical or corrupt, when facing one who possesses virtue, learning and merit equal or superior to his own, fails to show him a respect that intimates not only appreciation, but also identification of the man with his deserts. In other words he does not respect a man's merits *in abstracto*, but he respects, for his merits, the man himself—unless the man to be respected is an artist. The artist forms the only exception from the rule. In his presence the average man hesitates to display such feelings. He may, if the artist's work pleases him, reward it with a compliment, conventional or enthusiastic, but further he will not go. Apart from his work the artist is treated as a stranger to whom the conventionally respectable feel—or at any rate show—no inclination to approach more closely. To the length of actual discourtesy they may not go, but that feeling which prompts them to look up to the preëminent followers of any other honest pursuit, that sense of mental distance never asserts itself in our average man; both in feeling and demeanor he will discriminate against the artist.

The warrior, statesman, scientist, merchant—each of them meets with respectful attention when seen

in public. Their success is a matter of public comment; if their plans miscarry, causing failure and disaster, their censure is equally general. At times their failures have aroused public wrath to such a degree that their very lives were threatened, or even destroyed. Yet such intensity of public sentiment proves merely how implicit was the trust granted them, how high the respect bestowed on them before their downfall.

And yet nations, empires, religions and civilizations have come and gone and almost faded out of the memory of man, leaving behind them as evidence of their existence only a few great works of—Art. Their conquests, their power, their wealth, are gone never to return; their commerce is dead; their sciences are outlived—only the art-works left behind live in uncontested merit, in undiminished beauty, in immutable grandeur! Neither war nor commerce has ever directly enriched man's psychic or *inner* life. Art, on the other hand, has aimed at nothing else. Why is it, then, that men who give their whole lives to the realization of those highest and noblest purposes are practically shut out from the firesides of their fellowmen?

If anything beyond his fee be ever accorded to the artist, it is, perchance, an occasional friendly slap on the back, fraught with presumptious familiarity and saying as plainly as words might: "You are a queer sort. Half crank, half enthusiast, improvident,

impractical. But you are harmless, and what you do rather pleases me. Of course, you hardly know how you do it; nor do I suppose you know much of anything outside of what you call your Art—and goodness knows that that part you cannot help! You were born with it. But, as I said, I kind o' like it, and—well, you may come to see me sometime, I'll introduce you to the children—."

History proves that this is not overdrawn. Leaving aside the author of the Iliad—although the doubt thrown on his very existence might well serve as an illustration of the point in question—and beginning at a more recent date, Dante might be mentioned. It seems improbable that a man of his all-embracing love of humanity should have become a recluse from choice. Nor can it be assumed of Tasso. Michael Angelo told his townsmen: "Cain was of your ancestors—I know you do not shame his lineage," which does not suggest a very sociable footing with them. The Shakespeare-Bacon controversy with all its serious or foolish claims and counterclaims could scarcely have arisen had respectful attention been paid to Shakespeare, the man, in his lifetime. Turner and Byron might also be mentioned among those who were petted as artists and ignored as men. Emphatic illustration of public underestimation of the man (if not also of the artist) are obtained from the lives of Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and other great musicians. Not until King Ludwig's shield

protected him—and did it single handed, so to speak—was Wagner respected as a man, though at that time his Tannhäuser, Lohengrin and Flying Dutchman had already found their way into the people's hearts. Not even the financially successful artists have been honored by the general public for virtues not relating to their art; their learning, their manly courage, their morality, their broadness of view—not at least unless they enforced such recognition by means foreign to their life-work and by methods which almost imperilled their personal dignity. In this case might be mentioned as illustration the names of Rubens, Metastasio, and Liszt.

The foremost few in culture and social stations have —in the old world—always favored familiar intercourse with artists. Emperors, Kings and Popes have frequently conferred high distinctions upon men of artistic genius with the obvious purpose of opening the people's eyes to their high *personal* qualities. But all such efforts were in vain. Though at times enthusiastic enough over the artist's work, the public have but grudgingly conceded to the man, himself, that personal esteem which he—as we shall see—so well deserves, and which is so readily and generously granted to men in other pursuits.

This is said with full cognizance of the large sums received, and the gushing lionizing experienced, by a few foreign artists in recent years. Money has

no bearing upon this subject, and the vogue of a season is no criterion of personal esteem. Furthermore, isolated instances—and such these were—only prove the rule.

This general and unwise discrimination against the artist has not been mentioned in a spirit of complaint, but because the fact was needed to throw light upon the subject; a light not only characteristic, but also necessary for a rational discussion.

A widely spread belief exists that artistic ability originates solely, or mainly at least, in a mysterious and rare gift of nature called "Talent." This word is used by the great mass of people to account for the beauty and power of an artist's work as well as for the mental and moral elevation, erudition, courage, and sincerity manifested therein.

Here and there a vague suspicion may obtain that the artist might have to perform a small amount of actual work to gain his skill. This work, however, is thought to be of a rather pleasurable kind—more play, as it were, than work. The main source of his ability is always supposed to be "Talent." This being a free gift of Nature and innate, the happy possessor of it is not deemed worthy of any particular credit for his achievements save his stipulated fee. Persons of culture realize, of course, that a fine art-work is a serious interpretation of life. Nevertheless even they—led astray, perhaps, by misconception of the theories of Schopenhauer and

Hartmann—often consider the artist himself, the man in the artist, as not quite responsible for his own work. Unless it be bad . . . .! If good, the credit belongs really to Nature, to God, not to the man.

In its last analysis, this view is correct. No fault could or should be found with it, were it not, in that last analysis, reserved exclusively for the artist. It is hardly fair to assume that the average man spends his life on the thought-plane of last analyses. Therefore it cannot be this that prompts his mental attitude toward the artist, but rather his erroneous conception of the phenomenon he calls "talent" and his extreme ignorance of its frequency, ay, its ubiquity.

Talent, no doubt, is a mystery. The blackberry that drops from the branch; the fear that quivers in our bosoms; the bird that wings its way across the sky; the thought that flashes through the human brain—each of them is a mystery. But instead of giving rise to mere vulgar superstition, the particular mystery called "talent" should have tempted the best powers of the human mind to a careful investigation of its true aspect and position. Talent will probably remain a mystery forever, but this mystery should be divested of the false attributes with which ignorance, indolence and humbug have clothed it. It should be freed of its stagey encumbrances, so that, unmarred by fictitious qualities, it may shine forth in its own true light. Instead of

giving the entire credit for the artist's work to God the world should rather give Him praise for having distributed talent so lavishly among mankind.

A full realization of the commonness of that gift leads to the logical conclusion that talent plays not so large a part by far in the achievements of the artist as is generally supposed. Devoid of talent, one cannot become an artist, to be sure; but in the possession of it lies but a small fraction of the artistic equipment. The main portion of that equipment must be laboriously and painstakingly acquired, and it can be acquired only by practicing the higher virtues and exercising the finer qualities of heart and mind—will-power, industry, steadfastness, self-discipline and, above all, love.

What, then, is the popular idea about talent? It is a combination of notions partly superficial and partly absurd. It is, for instance, often thought that to a person with talent the acquisition of knowledge and executive skill comes easy. Though seemingly warranted, this notion is flatly contradicted by the lives of all artists, and with particular force by the lives of the greatest among them. *Ex nihilo nihil fit* is perhaps more true in art than anywhere else. Music, above all other arts, makes inordinate demands upon the artist's nervous as well as muscular force.

Music, one may add, means to a numerous class of people only a pleasant, ear-tickling jingle. Thought

is never looked for by them but, at best, just a primitive tonal design. Many amateurs, so called, who cater to this class of people, possess undoubtedly a certain "knack" which, however, far from deserving the dignified name of talent, is a purely imitative trait which they have in common with many birds and animals. As the trained canary pipes his "Home, Sweet Home" in perfect innocence of any sentiment, domestic or otherwise, so the facile amateur jingles away, satisfied by catching his easily pleased listener's ear and indifferent to the possibility of making the primary appeal to that organ a means of stirring mind and heart. The first step towards a serious study of music makes this amateurish knack dwindle to nothing, if not even become an impediment—which, fortunately, it mostly does.

Another notion, endorsed by the dictionaries, is that—to quote the most popular one—"talent is an unusual, natural endowment of a specific kind, as for instance, for music." Here is a store of errors in one sentence! Talent is neither "specific" nor "unusual," and if it be "natural"—as all things are in a certain sense—it is so to no greater extent than heroism, virtue, honor, and other qualities which are never unappreciated because "natural." Assuming, however, talent to be specific—"as for instance, for music"—whereof should it consist? Of an extraordinary adaptability of the hand? If so, which

shape of hand is most adaptable? Two pair of hands were never more different in appearance than those of Liszt and Rubinstein. The former's thin-featured hand and long, spiderlike fingers seemed incapable of a performance *à la Jupiter tonans* on the keyboard such as I have seen them render more than once; while on the other side, Rubinstein's massive, almost elephantine hands and thick fingers looked equally incapable of the bewitchingly sweet and tender touch that so often set me marvelling—and admiring. The hands of still living pianists who may be called "great" represent all types and shapes. There is no uniformity among them except in the number of digital appendages; and that cannot very well be regarded as "unusual."

Perhaps a "musical ear" constitutes the specific natural endowment? The actual meaning of that popular phrase is somewhat difficult to find out. Probably tone-memory is implied. Many persons possess it and so do many animals and birds. Cavalry horses—not to speak of their riders—learn readily to distinguish between the various bugle-calls. Dancing bears, trained monkeys, snakes and other animals unfailingly recognize the pieces accompanying their performances. Parrots, jays, canaries, mocking birds and, in fact, most singing birds are gifted with memory for tone and tune. This quality, therefore, has no right to be regarded as "an unusual endowment of Nature," and still

less as one to which the artistic ability of the musician could be exclusively, or even chiefly, attributed. It may be that a peculiar acuteness of perception and discernment of pitch is referred to by those who talk of a "musical ear." Unfortunately, most of the great masters did not even possess that quality of hearing which is known as "absolute pitch," while, on the other hand, it is sometimes found among musicians of the lower and lowest rank. And it is a quality that every normal ear can acquire by a very little training.

The combination of tone-memory and that questionable "knack" mentioned before produces sometimes the phenomenon known as "playing by ear." This symptom of "talent" is a very alarming one. It is largely incurable, and when it breaks out, those who are within hearing distance, even if of small musical discernment, are made to suffer excruciatingly. Parrots of the beaked and feathered kind are much to be preferred. They are usually superior in accuracy.

The "power of improvisation" is often also referred to as a sign of "talent." To hear our swagger dilettanti "improvise," makes us, in spite of all, prefer their playing by ear. The aimless progression of combinations that "happen," but which are none the less well-worn and chosen automatically, is devoid of all musical sense. The English language should not dignify that kind of thing with the term

"improvisation," since it possesses a much more accurate designation for it in the word "twaddle." If, on the other hand, an artist improvises in public, he has carefully trained himself to do it. He has laid in a fine stock of turns and schemes and has cultivated a certain repartee-like quickness of utterance. Improvisation used to be an obligatory part of every good musician's training (not of his "innate talent"), but it fell into desuetude except as a pastime, because it was found to be useless, and the world is not much the poorer for its loss. A good ear, tone-memory, and an apt hand are, indeed, necessary to the musician, but not more so than good air, clear water and wholesome food. Since the public entirely overlooks these material factors as causes of musical ability, it has forfeited the right to seek such causes exclusively in the organic qualities mentioned. For persons who have a good ear, tone-memory, and an apt hand, are more numerous by far than those to whom good air, clear water and wholesome food have been granted by a kindly fate.

Substituting eyes for ears, the entire argument becomes applicable to the graphic arts. Exchanging them for a few other external qualities, such as a sonorous speaking voice and a shapely figure, it extends to histrionics.

Having stripped the "natural endowments" of all their rarity, having shown that ear, memory and

aptitude, when simply normal, are quite sufficient for any one as a starting outfit in music, the qualities and faculties which really do form the basis of artistic mastership should now be considered. Only through a proper recognition of these faculties and qualities may a popular superstition be changed into a rational regard for things far more serious than mere physical aptitude and for matters which will be found to bear the stamp of dignity, virtue, and true merit.

Art, to use the most frequently employed metaphor, is a temple where the human heart prays for a fuller utterance of its joys and sorrows; where God and nature and the heart of man are the sole theme of all sermons; and where the True and the Good are manifested through the Divine principle of the Beautiful. Large terraces lead up to this temple; they are the preparatory stages of those who aspire to its priesthood. From the lowest plane, that of the apprenticeship, through the stage of journeyman to the highest one—that of master of the craft—the aspirant must *work*. He must learn the great lesson of *self-denial*, of *obedience*, and of hard, tedious, monotonous, highly unpleasant, but, in spite of all, unremitting *work*. And still another lesson, the hardest of all, he must learn, *to work without a promise of reward!* For there is a stern, disheartening law which ordains that those who have

attained to mastership must, for their admittance into the priesthood of the temple, submit to an election by voters who are not even known to them. How many brave and faithful workers fail in this election and are barred from the priesthood—barred forever!

However, not a few keep up their courage, undismayed by the great uncertainty, and work on and on during their apprenticeship until they reach the next degree. Here, already, many turn away and abandon their course. Only a few hold out until they arrive at mastership and then—ah, then all depends upon the mysterious election. Failing in this, they are free to leave and seek other occupations—which many of them do—or to remain in the *service* of the priesthood: but attain to it they never will or can.

Now, to serve a noble cause, even in a humble station, is not without joy. Some of the disappointed candidates find contentment in this, but not without many a painful inward struggle, for when the direful "No" sounds from the portal of the temple, it is uttered with a voice of thunder, crushing long-cherished hopes and stunning the hearts of the luckless ones. Among them there may be one who cannot reconcile himself to his failure. He is quite willing to remain the servant of the temple, for he has many dear friends among the priests; but he rebels in his heart at what seems to him a crying injustice.

"Why," he asks again and again, "why was I not elected? Have I not worked as faithfully as anybody? Is not my workmanship of the best?"

No one knows the answer, no one replies. One day, however, some friend and former comrade in the struggle, now risen into full priesthood, may be moved to compassion by his grief and resolves to bring him such consolation as he can.

"Why," he asks the unfortunate one, "why did you aspire to the priesthood? What gave you the persistence to keep up your long and dreary trial work?"

"The hope of reward! The proud prospect of seeing the masses bow when I became a priest! The expectation of honor, glory, splendor, of power over others, of—"

The priestly friend replies, his hands upraised
As if to intercept the utterance
Of some heart-tainting blasphemy:
"Such hopes, my friend, are sinful and they should
No shelter find in honest, noble hearts.
But stay—perchance you fail to comprehend
Your own soul's deepest, innermost desires.
Come, let me ask you as a proven friend—
For we are friends, I trust, as good as ever:
Was there no higher longing in your heart?
Deep in your soul did you not feel the urging
Of messages that none could voice but you?
Of visions, dreams that strove to be revealed,

Delivered to mankind from yonder shrine
Where all the world could hear and profit by them?
Were you not wearied by the long delay
Of that sweet hour that brings (if you are chosen)
The consecration and the right to preach
The thoughts that thronged your mind, to speak
your message?
Was not your toil-worn patience sorely tried?
Mine own has threatened to give out full often,
And many times, indeed, my heart grew faint.
The tempter whispered: 'Go! Desert thy labors,'
And more than once have I been near to yielding;
But when I came to do it—ah, my friend,
A thousand heartstrings tied me to this temple
And, though rebellious, inwardly I felt:
My place, my life is *Here!* And if I leave—
The message in my heart remains unspoken,
And this, my friend, could never be, lest I
Should suffer woes and heartaches past all telling,
Unceasing like the agonies of Hades,
Lest I should perish—wretched and a fool!"

"No," says the disappointed workman after a pause of musing wonderment, "such highflown notions never occurred to me. But what of it? Was not my workmanship as good as yours? And does it count for naught?"

"Far from it, friend. Look but around and see
How few can do such goodly work as yours.
The priesthood cannot spare a skilful master

Whom we have tried and know, he can be trusted.
Of honor a fair measure will be yours;
And who shall teach the neophyte but you?—
Of course, your work shall have to be prescribed;
But you devote it to a glorious end;
To carry out the plans, the dreams of Genius
You will contribute an important part!
The *highest* bliss the soul of man can feel:
To give its dreams enduring form and fashion,
A lasting life unto its thoughts and fancies,
Interpreting man's life, to show the heavens
As they are mirrored in his soul's recesses;
To voice what moves and stirs the hearts of others
And what they long, but vainly strive, to utter;
To feel with them and help that they may know
Each other better, and to be the breath,
The voice of all mankind; to feel yourself
As one with those whom God has made your
brothers—
That ecstasy of heart and soul, that highest
Beatitude can nevermore be yours.
Do not repine, my friend, but thank your fortune
That—since your heart is free from such desires—
The priestly robe is not upon your shoulders.
For you with open eyes might then have gazed
And yet not seen the temple mysteries.
Believe me, friend, that to a heart like yours
The priesthood should have turned a mocking
shadow."

And most probably it would. For his patience was stolidity; his perseverance, covetousness; his aspirations, mere ambition. Vanity and lust after power held in his heart the place that should have been filled by the "ideals" of an artistic temperament, by love.

But is not "artistic temperament" merely another name for "talent"? By no means. For talent denotes *specific* qualifications, while artistic temperament means a predisposition of a *general* nature; the former points at *physical*—or, perhaps, mental—advantages, while the latter refers to a *psychic* constitution; the former specifies attributes of the *external* man, attributes easily destructible by accident, such as may cause the loss of a hand, of seeing or hearing;—the latter concerns solely the *inner* man and influences his thoughts and views of life in *all* its phases. Indeed, they are not synonyms.

To analyze the artistic temperament would be a task which might put the powers of the profoundest psychologist to a severe test; for much as all persons of artistic temperament may have in common, yet, at closer view, they display such variety of hue, of inward trend, as to make generalization well-nigh impossible. One trait, however, seems to be predominant in the artistic temperament, namely its intense "humanness"—if this word receives the reader's consent to denote a tendency

towards bringing the external world into direct relation with the soul-life of man. It is a bias of the soul for love of humanity, either producing, or resulting from, a high degree of emotional susceptibility. Thus the sculptor who is modelling an animal, for instance, will not rest satisfied with a mere reproduction of its features, but aims at an attitude or pose which expresses a feeling. And this feeling must be one which the *human* heart appreciates and shares. A landscape cannot serve as a motive to a painter unless he arranges its component parts in such relation to each other, and with such use of light and atmosphere, that a *human* emotion is reflected by it.

In beholding a fine sunset the artistic temperament enjoys not merely the radiant play of colors, but all that the human mind associates with it, finding it to suggest the feeling of glory, triumph, serenity, melancholy, happy or gloomy presage, or any of the innumerable sentiments to which the human soul is accessible. While keenly appreciating the sensuous beauty in the colors of a fine sunset, artistic temperament goes at once beyond it and finds in it the touch with the *human* element, with *human* relations, *human* soul-interests. The musician, dispensing altogether with the reproduction of visible objects, aims still more directly at the relations between the external world and our inner, emotional life.

With the fondness of a parent, with the lover's

intuition and devotion, with the warm sympathy of a friend, the artistic temperament extends its psychic feelers into the mystery of the human soul. Unconsciously, it probes, observes, analyzes every shade and degree of joy, every phase of suffering, of agitation, of serenity—of all, in short, that man can perceive with his psychic organs. To grief or joy, when mute for want of fitting or adequate utterance, it brings relief by lending force and beauty to its expression; it arouses kindred feelings in the hearts of others. Through painting, statuary, poem, symphony, the artistic temperament has helped the world to understand better the lessons of its great moral teachers. It always aims to strengthen the best impulses in man and to awaken them where they lie dormant. It works for *good.* It says the unsayable. Thus it fosters a better mutual understanding among the membership of human society, and therein lies its practical utility, its mission.

An account of the functions of the artistic temperament in the household of society would be very sadly incomplete if mention were not made of the fact that, in addition, it is also the truest, most accurate and most reliable recorder of what is generally named "the spirit of the times." Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment," for instance, is not merely a great work of art—perhaps the most famous single picture in the world—but it reveals in its artistic form the naïve and horribly material idea

which in the artist's day was entertained of the Final Reckoning. This reflex of the tendencies and predominant thoughts of the times is, in fact, one of the meritorious features of great art-works, and it is as true in the paintings of ancient Egypt, recently unearthed, as in the Eroica Symphony by Beethoven or in Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelung."* What we know of the life, customs and mental views of ancient Greece we have learned from its architecture, sculpture and poetry. Archeology has determined the time periods, but their spirit is expressed in the art-works they have left us. What significance has ancient Troy for us other than that which Homer gave it?

Yes, the artistic temperament is a keen, though often unconscious observer, but in order to become useful it must be coupled with an extremely delicate, sensitive nervous organization, and with the "unusual natural endowment" of a *strong character.* For the psychic phase of "art" cannot find expression through the artist until he completely masters the "craft" which is the embodiment of his branch of art. This preparation, as said before, is so full of drudgery, so unemotional, so distasteful to an imaginative mind, so distressingly mechanical, so dry and so wearying, that it will kill the artistic temperament, roots and shoots, in any heart where it is not imbedded as firmly as in solid rock.

*See Bernard Shaw's "Perfect Wagnerite."

It is, therefore, preëminently the qualities of character that make the artist what he is, and not the endowments of nature, which are generally implied by the word "talent." These may influence his choice of material, but nothing more.

If, for instance, he feels an instinctive inclination toward music, this is nothing very unusual; or can there be one "with soul so dead" as not to like music? Many love it well enough to study it as an accomplishment; others, loving it still better, select it as a medium of expression for their artistic temperament. Of these, although they fill the Schools and Academies of America and Europe by thousands, why must there be so few that are "heard from" in the world of music? They have, all of them, apt hands, correct ears, acute tone-memory; they feel the artistic temperament with sufficient force to choose their pursuit in life according to its promptings. Why are there, nevertheless, so few who really become artists? *Because the majority of them are lacking in the higher qualities of mind and heart.* Because they shrink from drudgery and self-abnegation. Because, having entrusted themselves to the guidance of a master-artist, they do not *obey* him. Because they know so little of reverence for superiority—and here recurs the thought expressed on the opening page—as to subject the advice of lifelong experience to their immature criticism. These, without exception, are the causes

of all failures in art. From whatever side the question of the artist's ability and merit may be viewed, the answer always points at—character.

Highly as his physical aptitude, the "natural endowments," may be esteemed as implements, the artist's significance depends upon the use his character makes of them. Again and again it is the character of *the man himself* that makes for merit in the artist, and since the public does not separate the man from his qualities in any other pursuit of life, why does it so persistently do so in regard to the artist? Instead of ascribing his achievement to physical, purely external gifts of nature, the world should form a higher, nobler conception of the *man* in the artist and recognize that the exceptional endowments which he did receive from nature are of a far more dignified order and quality. The artist is neither a freak or caprice of nature, nor is he an exceptional animal.

He is an exceptional man.

What has become of the mystery of "talent"? Is it solved? Surely not. Nor, in utter forgetfulness of the impossibility of such a task, has this discussion aimed at its solution. The history of human thought, however, records many truths that have been discovered by a process of elimination. False beliefs and false theories which clouded the truth—though

at times they were very popular—had to be disproved one by one before the truth could beam upon the world in unimpeded light. The thoughts here expressed may, upon close investigation, not prove unassailable; they may be found to be neither fundamental nor final, but they should, nevertheless, call attention to the circumstance that the conception of "talent" which is now current and popular does no longer conform to the reality and is not borne out by honest observation and analysis of facts. Hence, while we may never learn what is the mystery of "talent," the longing for the truth implanted in the human heart demands that we should try to ascertain, at least, what it is *not*, and what it can not be.

ON ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

ON ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Apology

Biography forms of literature a large branch which the world has accepted as legitimate. Hence, a mere questioning of the propriety of writing a dead man's biography (including his private correspondence) and a disputing of the benefits to be derived from reading it will, at first sight, appear like very little short of vandalism. I trust, however, that this first horrifying impression will be somewhat modified by the consideration that I purpose to refer exclusively to the biographies of *artists.* In return for this self-limitation I ask no more than that my argument should be heard before it is condemned. It is on Seneca's wise admonition, "*audiatur et altera pars,*" that I base my invitation of the reader's openminded attention.

The views I am about to reveal did not present themselves to my mind in the broad thoroughfares of the realm of art, travelled over by the trifling amateur; neither did I happen upon them on a conventional moral lookout or belvedere recommended by any of the numberless esthetical guidebooks. I came to them by rather slow approaches and not until I had served many years as a guide

to young people who ventured upon the steep and stony road to musical art. In this service I have often observed the lamentable effects which the reading of biographies has upon young students. It is, however, not only from this point that I have viewed the subject. Its aspects are numerous and some of them are rather serious; though the one on which I incline to lay the greatest stress will, I fear, be the one that is most difficult to point out and more difficult, perhaps, in modern America than elsewhere. I can, therefore, not offer the following views to the reader with any hope for his approval unless he arm himself with a little patience and with a willingness to follow me to those points of vantage where he can behold the subject in the light in which I saw it. The way to these points is a trifle long and the road, far from being smooth, leads past many obstructing rocks of prejudice; sharp-edged, inert, unyielding boulders, no doubt. But if fairly surefooted, the reader will find it easy enough to follow my lead and I dare to hope that at some of these points, at least, he will admit the fairness of the views presented. It may be well to say in conclusion that the word "artist" shall here not apply exclusively to painters and sculptors—as is the indefensible custom among the English-speaking

nations—but comprise the workers in all branches of Art, which means the expression of purely psychic processes.

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.
Horace.

Crede mihi, bene qui latuit bene vixit.
Ovid, Tristia.

When we take a general survey of the delights life has to offer, such as the enjoyment of fame, the glory of success, the raptures of love, the pleasure of travel, the luxuries of the table, the varied privileges of wealth and even the gratification of our sensibilities—we find that the happiness they give us depends not a little upon our age, our health, our freedom from care, and other circumstances. There is, however, one source of happiness which is unconditional. No change of years or circumstance can ever deprive it entirely of its delight. Its depth, dignity and sweetness surpasses beyond all comparing the enjoyments of fame, power, luxury or wealth. It is the consciousness that, somewhere, there is a spot, a nook, a niche whither no idly curious eye dare follow us; where no cynic mouth may sneer at us when, under the sway of some great emotion—of joy or grief—we may give ourselves up to our feelings; where, bit by bit, we may degustate our joy, hug it, ay, gloat over it;

where we may sing, dance or—if grief holds sway over us—weep and mourn without in either case making a spectacle of ourselves. This nook or niche, consecrated to ourselves and our inner life, may be a palace, a hotel room or log-cabin, for it is not the locality but our mental attitude that makes of the locality, whichever it be, a sanctum sanctorum of our soul. This niche is *Privacy!* Ah, privacy, sweet privacy! To retire to or emerge from it, at our own sweet will and pleasure; to be in and with the world when we wish it and to be away from it when it wearies us—what a boon to thinking, self-respecting people! The learned judge, Sir Edward Coke, said, "The house of every one is to him as his castle and fortress, as well for his defense against injury and violence as for his repose." The British nation has, in abbreviated form, adopted his dictum as a motto, and while the abbreviation seems to overemphasize the element of security, it was probably not intended to imply the frequency of danger but rather the repose of mind and body that is begotten or, at any rate, much favored by privacy. Yes, there is repose in privacy. There is peace. There are its cosy comforts that invite, ay, tempt us to commune with ourselves, to receive our thoughts in solemn audience, to conjure up old memories, to exchange thoughts and views with our dear ones; to remember with them the sorrows and joys of the past, discuss the present and plan the future.

There are the thousand things big and little standing and lying about that reflect our tastes and the changes of our tendencies through the various stages of our life and impart to our home the stamp of our identity so markedly as to differentiate it from all other households, even from those where monetary and other circumstances are similar to our own.

These manifold charms of privacy, though quite of our own creation, have a reflex action upon us which ceases the moment we leave them, be it for months, days and even for a few hours. For while we are away, on business, on the street or on pleasure bound, we have to consider either material interests or special policies and conventions which induce many of us to assume a bearing, perhaps not artificial enough to be called a mask, and yet not quite natural enough to be entirely true to our real *ego*. There is many a courteous smile—or its suppression—dictated by social policy; there is for kindred reasons many a salute given or denied, accepted or evaded, though it may be quite contrary to our feelings; there is often an air of prosperity assumed to hide our reverses in business so as to preserve our credit—but why illustrate? The social lie in modern life is an established and recognized factor which requires neither proof nor illustration and which is perhaps as necessary at times as the pious fibs about the stork and about Santa Claus.

But oh, when we return to our home and its sweet

privacy, how quickly we change back again to our real selves! The heart, that was forbidden to speak while so momentous a matter as "business" was on our mind, here it unlocks the gates of love to let in all its warmth and light. The mind, so long on caution bent, on material advantages and profit, occupied perhaps by professional worries, investments and what not—here it is at ease; all caution is thrown to the winds, and faith and trust take its place. We speak again to ourselves or to those we hold dearest, and our confidence is unbounded by fear or worldly wisdom; for here, in the privacy of our home, we feel with Goethe: "Here I am Man, here dare I Man to be."

And so dear do we hold the delights of privacy that we reserve the participation in them exclusively for our dearest and most trusted friends. Indeed, the admission into our private life is granted to them as a distinction merited by a long and loyal friendship developed from mere acquaintance by slow stages, by kindly acts and other signs of mutually affectionate regard. There is no stronger mark of esteem and friendship in our giving than to treat the erstwhile stranger like a member of our family and admit him to the sanctum of our privacy.

Though upon occasion we may open our house and offer our hospitality to a wider circle, including even *les amis de mes amis;* though we may expose to their view our costliest books, our finest art treasures,

and offer them the best products of our kitchen and the choicest contents of our wine-cellar; though we may do all this and more on such occasions to cheer our guests—yet there is something which we withhold from them; something we have removed with our weekday clothes as we donned the more festive attire in honor of our guests; something we concealed from them as too sacred for the eye of the uninitiated. To our house and all its hospitality the guests were welcome, but not to its privacy, not to its intimacy, its *cachet*, its sweetest charm to ourselves. For, this privacy is our own! Our ownest own! It is the sanctum of our soul where what is best in us asserts itself; where our faults are weighed with lenity against our virtues and where our errors find forgiveness by forbearing love. This earthly paradise, as said before, consists neither of brick and mortar nor of architecture and decoration; it is created and maintained solely by the spirit of dignity and self-respect that animates its occupants; that spirit which, by means invisible but powerful, holds *hoi polloi*, the vulgarly and frivolously curious, at a distance and keeps the joys and sorrows of our lives discreetly within the heart-united circle of the family and its most trusted friends.

Upon this spirit of privacy reposes an institution of no mean importance in the life of a nation: it is called "good Society," sometimes "polite Society,"

because its constituents represent in their community the highest culture and refinement. According to Tarde's definition a community is "an aggregation of persons who are individually distinct and yet imitate one another." Unless we reject this definition entirely, which our sense of humor would not permit, we cannot fail to realize how beneficent the influence of good society must be upon the community at large; the more so as this influence is exercised unconsciously and hence without selfish interest, deriving its force, quite independent of wealth, solely from those internal qualities which are commonly understood by the term "good breeding."

It is to be very seriously regretted that this fine influence has been weakened of late by the advent of quite a different type of society, the rise of which is probably due to certain faulty economic conditions. This type, monopolizing the attention of the masses solely by the power of wealth and its ostentatious flaunting, can for this very reason lay no claim upon being called "polite" unless this word were meant to cover no more than the most rudimentary comities of social intercourse and not as an indication of culture of mind and heart with its resultant refinement of manners and development of tact.

(The reader may have asked long ago what all this has to do with the biography of artists, and I feel

guilty of having kept him somewhat in suspense, but I am compelled to ask his indulgence for a few moments more; for I wish to lead him to that point of vantage where I obtained the view which I invited him to share with me.)

That the constituency of this newer type of society recognizes the superiority of the older one is plainly enough demonstrated by their amusing efforts to elbow their way into it. And yet, this is perhaps their one redeeming feature. For in itself the striving for social elevation is not only legitimate but even praiseworthy; provided, however, that it be supported by fitness and prompted by the natural desire for such associations as will promise both mutual understanding of, and common interest in, the graces of life. When, however, the motives of this striving are not of such a nature; when the admission into good society is sought for no better purpose than to impress the public at large with one's social advancement—purely for its extrinsic value, as it were—then the striving becomes in the highest degree reprehensible because of its utter vulgarity. Sad to say, there are people who are not satisfied with their admission into a socially distinguished circle unless their presence there is advertised in such public prints as will carry the information down to the remotest strata of society —perhaps particularly to these. "Corrupted freemen are the worst of slaves." This sad fondness for

publicity, so shrilly contrasting with the dignity of privacy, is the more deplorable as it is not confined to men; women have their full share, if, indeed, not the lion's share of it.

Some good woman, for instance, gives a luncheon which is honored by the presence of socially or otherwise distinguished persons. She feels gratified at being surrounded by such a desirable company; so does her matrimonial appendage. Perfectly natural. But why, pray, should every shop or factory girl, as she reads her paper in the street car on the way to her work, have this very private affair rubbed into her mind? Does it interest her? The trouble is, that it does—and so much so as to induce in her mind comparisons with the scarcity and scantness of her own pleasures; it arouses her covetousness and her discontent. Is this the purpose of the publication? Let us hope not.

In a city of a hundred thousand inhabitants there are probably not more than a dozen people interested in the fact that Miss Gwendolyn X. Y. (whoever she might be) has returned from Podunk after a "successful visit" (whatever that means); why should this utterly irrelevant fact be forced upon the consciousness of a hundred thousand minds?

And if a worthy guest of note spends a few days in her house, cannot Mrs. Y. de Z. be happy without telling every woman in town through the papers, "Oh, we are quite intimate, we are—so I entertained

him, I did, and you—didn't, you didn't, you didn't! See?"

The motive for the publication may not always, perhaps not often, possibly never, be such an unkind one. It may be done in pure thoughtlessness, but even then it shows an utter lack of appreciation of the loveliest privilege which a monetary competency can afford: the privilege of privacy. This tendency of turning one's private residence into a show-window is not only deplorable because of its want of dignity, but it makes one wonder at the mental constitution of persons who, with the means of obtaining and preserving it ready in hand, deliberately forgo the chiefest distinction of true gentility.

It is easy to foretell that persons so constituted will never be brought into the embarrassing position of facing these lines and it is, therefore, hardly necessary to say—if by accident they should read them—that they could not possibly understand an argument which is based upon the love of privacy, of its gentility and its delightful charm, when they fail to appreciate its fundamental dignity. Self-respecting people, however, who do love their privacy and appreciate its delights and charms, will readily admit that we are, by justice and logic, bound to respect the privacy of others in the same measure as we wish them to respect our own. And if the privacy of our neighbor is sacred to us while

he lives—how much more so must it be when he is dead. (*De mortuis nil*—the rest of the quotation is quite unnecessary.) If he gave a part of his fortune to foster some scientific research; to help a much needed charity; if he wrote a good book, symphony or opera; if he painted a great picture or has in any other manner contributed to the progress of humanity, let him be praised for it; let his name be honored; let his gift be gratefully remembered; let him—if it must be and while there is room for it—have a statue in a public place; but do, in the name of decency, respect his private life! Let not his foibles, his human frailties be ruthlessly dragged from the sanctum of his home into the open market-place by way of a "biography"! For if his private life is laid bare to the public gaze for no higher purpose than to show that, after all, he had his failings as well as most of us have, then the book serves an ignoble purpose; and if the biographer depict him as being quite free from faults, the book would most probably be untrue. It would soon be discredited and thus lose even its alleged value as a model for emulation. In either case the question remains: *Cui bono?*

May a man not benefit or excel his fellowmen without being subjected to posthumous espionage?

The respect for a man's private life is, however, by no means an exclusive reason for discouraging the reading (and writing) of artists' biographies;

another, equally potent, reason lies in the circumstance that human nature—especially when finely organized and highly sensitive, as it must be with great artists—is subject to a peculiar and inexplicable division within itself; a division which the psychologist calls *dualism of the soul.* In plain words, there is in every man a higher and a lower nature. One who worships his Creator in the church with an honest heart and sincere feeling is, surely, in a frame of mind very different from that in which he attends to his worldly affairs during the week. This must not be taken as a veiled hint at those who "worship God on Sunday and skin their neighbor on other days." By no means! It refers to the average man. Nevertheless, if the high ideal of righteousness, which the Divine Service awakened or reawakened in his soul, should lose none of its lustre by the conflict of interests which he is apt to encounter in his daily pursuits, he would, indeed, be an exceptional man. He would be the exception that proves the existence of a rule, and as a rule Man's soul is afflicted with dualism; afflicted—or blessed. And this is particularly the case with artists. Now, it so happens that the artist, while at his work, is in a frame of mind not altogether dissimilar from that of the man in church; for while the artist is at work the acting forces in him, too, belong to his higher nature. He, too, perceives an ideal. He, too, strives to embody it in his daily work. He, too, is by

this very ideal transported from the workaday world into a higher, nobler, loftier realm; into a plane of thought and feeling where he may paint or chisel the human body in the nude without the remotest thought of nakedness; where he may group words and sentences into expressions of enduring beauty and forceful truth; where he may give tonal utterance to the emotions of man, from the softest ripple to the most tempestuous waves. Alas, it is not when the artist is in this frame of mind that the biographer deals with him. The esthetic writer of an "appreciation" and the critic, they usually confine themselves to a discussion of the artist's *work;* but the biographer deals with the *man* in the artist, he spies him out when he is *en négligé,* when he has to face the mechanical, technical, personal side of life, when he moves on the plane of his lower nature, when he is a plain citizen "even as you and I."

But the contrast between his ideal occupation and the sterner realities of life may vex the artist at times and, given a choleric temperament (which is not infrequent with artists), his vexations may cause a hasty, unkind word. He may be afflicted with some abnormal craving, like Schiller, for example, who had a passion for the odor of rotten apples; and if the pendulum of his vital energy was swinging high to the ideal side while he was at his work, it may afterwards swing just as high to the material side and tempt him to gratify his craving. He is by no

means exempt from the possibilities of being unhappily married or of any other domestic troubles, and these, taxing his patience perhaps beyond his power of endurance, may induce words and acts which are "not for publication" and which his family, acquainted with their cause, readily forgive for the sake of his virtues. What, in the name of common sense, has the world at large to do with all this? Is the raking up of such eminently private matters anything but a purely mercenary pandering to the most plebeian curiosity? Is it anything better than what constitutes the occupation of the "village gossip"? Entering a store to make a purchase we do not enquire into the private affairs of either the owner or the salesman; why should we not show, at least, an equally respectful desistence to a man who, instead of trading in the work of others, sold us what only his innermost and best self could produce?

Certain esthetic wiseacres opine that a familiarity with the author's or composer's life has an influence upon the interpreting artist's conception of their works; but this is pure mental vagary. How could, and why should, a knowledge of the words and acts of his lower nature be favorable to the conception of those utterances which emanated from a man's higher nature? Absurd! An actor to whom the part of Richard III was entrusted will probably look into history and read all he can find about Richard, but not about Shakespeare; because in the task before

him the *man* Shakespeare is of no particular interest. Whether the artist expresses himself in tones, colors, lines, or words, written or voiced, his work is from his private life a thing apart. His work may be influenced by the current ideas and events of his time, but this would be reflected in his work. If this reflex cannot be traced in his work without raking up his private life, it cannot be essential for an intelligent rendition of his work. Had the author or composer been conscious of such an influence, he could not have created a masterpiece; and if he was not conscious of this influence, we certainly have no right to ghoulishly disinter the key to the soul-mysteries which he took unsolved with him into the grave. These delicate processes by which certain extraneous impulses unconsciously transform themselves in a composer's mind into artistic concepts—we have no right to retrace their course to the starting-point in detective fashion for the irreverent and puerile amusement of seeing cause and effect in juxtaposition. It is an unholy procedure which neither esthetics nor ethics can justify; it smacks of frivolous soul-dissection. What matters it to us whether Beethoven thought in his "Eroica" of Napoleon, Hannibal, Cæsar or Tamerlane? What matters it to whom he originally dedicated it? Nay, more; is the very title a matter of necessity? Does not the Symphony tell its own musical story? Would anybody take it for a pastoral or carnevalistic

tone essay? Or, perhaps, for a "Sinfonia domestica"? It is sometimes said to be of importance to know of certain works at which stage of the composer's life they were created. Granting the importance—though only for the moment—it would not speak for biography but rather for mere chronology. This is supplied in music by opus-numbers, in books by the year of publication, and while this may not be an absolutely reliable guide it will prove to be so in the majority of cases. Besides, it is not necessary, because the stage of a master's mental and psychical maturing is, like all other essentials, easily enough inferred by comparing his works with one another. He would be a sorry kind of musician who could read his way through Beethoven's Sonatas or Symphonies without noticing how strongly the first ones are influenced by Mozart, how steadily the emancipation from his model progresses, and how, finally, their forms grow larger and larger, expanding with that conscious and intelligently used freedom of genius "who makes and keeps his selfmade laws." The musician who cannot realize these changes by a study of the master's work will surely gain nothing in this respect by reading an account of his private life. Such a musician had better change his profession and make room for a more intelligent *confrère*.

The conception of a work of art, creatively or for purposes of interpretation—punctiliously exact writing or deciphering being, of course, presupposed—is

largely a matter of feeling. It may be well to remember that "no intellectual symbol, such as a descriptive book would furnish, can ever completely fill the full measure of a feeling."* Whether too light, too volatile or too powerful, the lineaments of feelings are always finer than the finest network of worded or "wordable" ideas. This is the reason why reflection has an irresistible tendency to destroy "the native hue of resolution" and to supplant it with something like a levelling stoicism. In this tendency lurks a serious danger to reproductive art and artists; a danger arising, not from the difference between art and philosophic reflection, but from the elements they possess in common. The work of the creative artist as of the philosopher starts from a primary *feeling* and ends with self-liberation from this feeling by certain procedures; but in these procedures, that is, really, in all that lies between the primary feeling and the finished result, the philosopher differs very widely from the artist. Philosophy subjects the primary feeling to the scrutiny of *reflection*, pursues it *intellectually* to its last consequences; while art strives for a *sensuous objectivation* of the primary feeling and exhausts its subject through the vocabulary of *sensuous perceptions*. There is, of course, no absolute separation between the sensuous and the intellectual; still,

*E. Spranger, "Beethoven."

they are wide enough apart to make the philosopher extremely cautious against the inadvertent intrusion of anything emotional in his intellectual lucubrations. Conversely, the artist bewares of purely intellectual inductions and deductions. He carefully guards against the influence of anything and everything that lies not in the work, itself, which is under contemplation. This ban should be sweeping and include, first of all, the reading of biographies; for the intrusion of the composer's personality into a study of the creations of his imagination must of necessity bias the interpreter's conception. If Buffon's dictum, "*Le style, c'est l'homme,*" is true, then the style is all that connects us with the man in an artist. Not his shape, his face, his love-affairs, his debts, his personal disposition—only his style, for in it will be revealed the sum total of his experience, his grasp upon life, his higher nature. With his private affairs we have no concern whatever, whether the artist be dead or alive.

There is no dramatist whose plays have retained their freshness and vitality as long as those of Shakespeare—and how very little is known of his private life! On the other hand, there is precious little in the private life of the much less important Dr. Johnson that Boswell has withheld from our knowledge, and yet—honestly—would it have been an unbridgeable gap in the history of literature if Dr. Johnson's life had not been written? With all

due justice to Boswell's style and exactness of observation one cannot help feeling that 99 per cent. of the contents of his volume are nothing but pure, unmitigated gossip, which helps no one to a better understanding of anything worthy of appreciation. It has been said that the personal association with a man of genius is a great privilege, and since in his life this privilege can be granted to but a few, the biography—appearing as it does after death—extends this privilege to the many; that the reading of his biography brings *him* nearer to us. But—why should it? Is the man of genius identical with the creations of his fancy? Does it increase our interest in Thackeray's writings when we learn that the satirist of "Snobs" was, himself, a good deal of a snob? Some people are not satisfied with the pleasure of reading a novel unless they find out *who* was the model for this or that of its characters, *who* is satirized in it, *who* inspired it, etc., etc., etc. And when they have found it out—or think they have—what of it? Idle, post mortem gossip!

A favorite defence of biography reading is that it is read not so much on account of its subject as because it brings us into touch with the "spirit of the times"; but even this is only a subterfuge. For to understand the spirit of a past age requires great scholarship and an erudition so wide as is not attainable to everybody. Moreover, this understanding is gained far better from the study of history, from

the actions of the composite race-mind, than from a biography which, after all, shows only the relation of one individual to the spirit of his time. Besides, the less an artist's work has to do with the spirit of his time, the longer it is apt to live, for great minds live in the future.

The line which the devourers of biographies quote most frequently to screen their passion for gossip, is the *second* one of the second epistle in Pope's "Essay on Man":

> The proper study of mankind is man.

The line which precedes this, however, they carefully desist from quoting—why? Because it would destroy the defensive value of the second line, for it shows plainly that by "man" Pope meant "thyself" as an antithesis to "God."

It reads:

> Know then *thyself*, presume not *God* to scan;
> The proper study of mankind is man!

Would that the biography gluttons knew *themselves* a little better and let the dead artists rest in their graves!

What the master in art gives to the world is his *work!* It stands on its merits or falls by its defects. The world may accept his work or reject it—but there its rights end! If he breaks the laws of the land, the

courts of justice will deal with him—but judge his work by *its* merits, not by the author's social virtues or failings. Should it be his work that offends public opinion *he* must, of course, be held responsible and bear the penalty. If it arouses enthusiasm, give *him* the praise. He will be grateful, even if this praise assume the form of a public ovation; but when the ceremony is over, *please* allow him to retire again into the privacy of his home circle; and respect this privacy also after his death.

A word may be said here about the artist's occasional "sins against conventions." To demand of an artist that he should lead a conventional private life is an injustice so monstrous as to border on the nonsensical. We demand that his work should disclose to us vistas of life that are deeper and wider than our own; that, directly or indirectly, it should stimulate our intellect, imagination, emotion and ethical feeling; that, for the time being, his work should take us out of the wearying sameness of our daily grind and teach us to contemplate life and ourselves from a higher plane—this is our demand upon the artist, and it is a just demand. Yet, in the very face of it, we forbid him everything that could bring him such experiences as will give him that broad perspective and wide and delicate grasp upon life which we expect to find reflected in his work. The creation of a novel, opera, symphony, or the artistic interpretation of a masterwork, that is not

strongly colored by the author's or interpreter's temperament, does not win our interest, much less our approval; but of the artist, himself, as a man, we demand that he have the temperament of a clam or else we cry: Anathema! It is like blaming a pearl-fisher for getting wet. This absurdly contradictive attitude is, no doubt, due to the deplorable circumstance that the majority of people believe morals and conventionality to be interchangeable synonyms, which, of course, they are not. How numerous were the voices raised in pharisaical indignation against Carlyle, Whitman, Mozart, Wagner, and many other great artists! It does seem strange that these "unco guid" pharisees were never struck by the thought which lies so near, namely, that the voices of these artists reached so much further than their own and lasted ever so much longer. No less strange is the circumstance that the higher Mrs. Grundy raised her voice against an artist as a man, the more eagerly she devours his biography after his death; and when his biography disproves the naughty, naughty things "they said" of him, Mrs. Grundy is —disappointed.

Balzac once said that "the artist has long ears—on the inside." Why not leave them there? Why insist upon his wearing them on the outside, like other good—that is, conventional—people?

There have been men whose life, itself, was a work of art; men whose value to the world lay in their

conduct, in their personal disposition, in their historical significance in so far as it grew out of their personality. Their biographies should be read, by all means, because *it was their personal conduct which constituted their legacy to the world*, and because good conduct, integrity, wisdom, are certainly commendable for emulation. It could be said, of course, that the love of these virtues should, more properly, be instilled and developed in us by our parents and educators instead of our having to wait until we chance to read such an inspiring biography. Since, however, some of us were perhaps deprived of elevating influences in our childhood, the biographies of such good and wise men as, for instance, Abraham Lincoln, will and must ever be of the greatest benefit to its readers. It should be borne in mind, however, that with such illustrious men their gift to the world was *identical* with their personality, while, as said before, with the artists it was from their private life *a thing entirely apart.*

These are not all, but some and perhaps sufficient, reasons why artists' biographies should be neither written nor read; not, at least, read by artists and more especially not by art-students to whom the word "Beethoven" represents not a person but a glorious *idea*, until—they read that in a spell of ill humor he discharged three cooks in one week; that he was deaf; that his nephew was a scapegrace; and so forth. This important information reduces in their

juvenile minds the "idea" Beethoven to a somewhat bristly "Mister." Is this a gain? Is it not rather destructive of that idealism without which nothing can be accomplished in art? There is, Heaven knows, little enough of this idealism to be found among the youngsters of a generation that is fast losing the understanding of the difference between the virtue of aspiration and the vice of ambition. If the laity insists upon reading artist-biographies, let them do so to their heart's content; but instead of hiding behind the pretext of literary, psychological or historical interest they should frankly confess to their indecorous fondness for post mortem tittle-tattle. If the respect for other people's private life is not innate in them—and it does not seem to be—why, then, in the name of decency, let them follow Hamlet's suggestion to his mother:

"Assume a virtue, if you have it not."

CIVILIZATION, CULTURE AND MUSIC

CIVILIZATION, CULTURE AND MUSIC

Said an old lawyer to a younger one: "When you are cornered in an argument, ask at once for a definition of the words used." This trick is so old as to have almost acquired the dignity of a maxim. While the witness under examination is racking his brain for a definition the lawyer gains time and if, finally, the witness succeeds in contriving some sort of definition, the lawyer, with a smile of superiority, quotes a case where (by misapplication) the poor layman's definition does not fit. Nothing is easier (and more reprehensible) than this old trick, because definitions cannot and do not explain any term the meaning of which lies deeper than the shallow flow of mere intellectual reasoning. Especially true is this of terms which apply to the "inner" man and to the higher nature in him; to such terms as "honor," "gentleman," "culture," and many kindred ones. We may say that "gentleman," "honor" and "culture" are so closely associated that we could readily define each of these words if we had terms to define the others; but we have no such terms, because these words denote chiefly psychic qualities, and for the designation and workings of such qualities human language has as yet not evolved a vocabulary; they are expressible only through the medium of art.

At an early stage of his development Man felt that there was a life within himself, not independent of his bodily existence, but yet altogether apart from it; an inner life which for its expression required more than the terminology of his speech afforded him. It was the growing consciousness of this inner life, and the craving for its communication to his fellow-beings, that awakened the art instinct in him*, and the further he developed as a species the more clearly he realized that the true province of art lies in expressing the undefinable, in uttering the unsayable.

However, where definitions fail to explain "the thing in itself," as Kant has it, a discussion of its chiefest qualities may be helpful to an understanding. Taking this general direction, it may be said at the outset that such words as "civilization" and "culture" are labels for ideas which differ not in degree but in essence.

Civilization

appertains exclusively to the *outer* man. It is an organizer of external conditions for people that need laws, regulations, ordinances to inform them as to what they may do and from what they shall have to refrain. Civilization groups human beings into units larger than families and tribes; it clusters them into communities, states, nations, it *aims* at protecting

*See Sternberg, "Ethics and Esthetics" (G. Schirmer, New York, 1917).

a person's life and limb; it, at least, *endeavors* to vouchsafe justice to him; it *tries* to safeguard his materal possessions, to regulate his commerce; in short, it is—with varying success—an *effort* to ensure the maintenance of everything that is *not* inherent to the man, himself, to his *ego.*

On the other hand, civilization makes it quite possible for a person to be morally absolutely right, and legally just as absolutely wrong; also *vice versa;* and it provides many means (and hence also the incentives) for moral obliquity, because the celestial Judge often differs so uncomfortably from the terrestrial judiciary.

Nevertheless, civilization seems to be as necessary as ground is for a building. Not every soil is fit for fruitful husbandry, but some sort of house can be built on almost any kind of ground. Just so does civilization enable even the lowest order of human intelligence to be serviceable to higher intelligences. Hence, civilization may be regarded as a mental and physical tenement district populated by those to whom the graces of life—which distinguish "life" from mere "existence"—have not yet become a necessity. Now, just as these inhabitants are best benefitted by serving the plans and aims of higher intelligences, so may some phases of civilization be used as means for the dissemination of

Culture

Before turning to a discussion of it, however, I must beg leave to say that by "culture" I do not refer to "that worst of pseudo-anythings which is quite properly misspelled *Cultchaw;* for that, instead of being assimilated knowledge, is but sheer undigested ignorance."*

Culture deals solely with the *inner* man, and since the inner man largely governs the outer man, culture may be regarded as "the power behind the throne," the *causa movens* in the affairs and deportment of higher intelligences. It presupposes fine instincts and denotes their perfect development. Knowledge is only an attribute of culture; for whatever knowledge a man possesses—especially in the realm of ethics and morals—must have sunk into him so deeply and permeated his being so thoroughly as to have gone away past his consciousness and formal memory; it must have turned into an instinct, as grammar does with a poet, before it can bear the fruit of culture. Scholarly people are not necessarily cultured, and cultured people are not necessarily scholars. Culture is the *soul-fruit* of knowledge; its flavor depends much less upon the seed of knowledge than upon the soil, which is the human psyche or soul or heart—call it by either name. In its deepest and noblest meaning culture

*W. F. Apthorp, "By the Way."

is the fount of that force which serves to work out a higher type of humanity. All other forces are but tributary to it.

At this point there suggest themselves four serious questions:

(1) What is the relative utility of culture and of civilization?

(2) What is the bearing of either upon the cosmic and developmental aspect of humanity?

(3) Which of the two, regarded with reference to the first question, is it more important to foster?

(4) What are the means to foster them?

Comparisons

Roughly speaking, civilization, or what we mean by that word, began in ancient Rome; for it was Rome that gave us the spirit of the man-made "law," the strongest pillar of civilization. Incidentally it also generated the sophistry for circumventing the law. (See "Cicero.") Nevertheless, the early Roman was the first to understand that the welfare of Rome, itself, was the best voucher for his own material prosperity and that, therefore, it was but prudent to align his personal interest with the welfare of all —that is, of all *Romans*, of course; the rest of the known world did not matter to him in the least. How far early Rome succeeded under this principle: how brief, how unfortunate were the experiments at

monarchy, republic, tribuneship, triumvirate, decemvirate, etc.: how all ended in direst disaster when the appeal to the inner man, from small beginnings, rose to the glorious triumph of Christ's teachings—all this is history and needs no repeating here. True, Rome rose again from its fall, but solely because it espoused the cause of the inner man through religion and art. Rome, had, however, fallen very low long before it was aware of it. Regardless of its vaunted civilization it had not cast off its barbarity; in fact, it proved that brutality, inhumanity and barbarity were perfectly compatible with "civilization," to which the arenas of the Coliseum and of the Circus Maximus, the slogan *Panem et Circenses*, the "living torches," etc., bear persistent, unexpungeable testimony. Rome could not free itself from barbarity because of the erroneous idea that culture could come to it from without; that it could be "imported." Its own civilization did not even aim at culture and hence it, practically, had none. In spite of our respectful regard for Horace, Lucretius, Seneca, and a few other thinkers who were, incidentally, also shameful sycophants, we can scarcely place their names in line with those who preceded them in Greece, such as Homer, Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aeschylos, Euripides, Sophocles, Pythagoras, Archimedes, Aristotle, Aristoxenes, Phydias, Praxiteles, and ever so many others of high significance to us at present.

It is a fact, alas, that Greece, too, had to fall; but it fell only politically and lost many of its art-works through the exportations enforced by Rome. Greece, however, has never sunk to the depth of Roman barbarity, and as to its culture—it never died! *The spirit of Hellas is eternal!* Eternal, as is the joy of life which it embodied.

Now, Greece had no civilization in the Roman meaning of the word; or rather, it treated the embryonic inklings of it very negligently. It failed to provide a palatable substitute for culture to the unculturable. Greece was, however, very religious according to its lights, which early Rome was not. Greece had a Periclean era, a "golden age"—Rome had not. Greece symbolized every phase of life by its superb mythology; it gave us, besides, philosophy, poetry, drama, rhetoric, oratory, a highly organized grammar, mathematics, natural science, machinery, architecture, sculpture, painting and—the first principles of organized music; principles that are recognized to this very day. What has the civilization of Rome given us to offset this magnificent array of living ideas—and ideals?

Greece gave us all that culture has in its giving; all that Rome could only borrow, but not assimilate; all that later ages could but develop on—sometimes—broader lines; but it gave us no "civilization." In its ideal enjoyment of the graces of life it failed to observe that the vast majority of humans were not

capable of grasping more than "civilization," and of this beautiful but fatal optimism it died a tragic, a pathetic death; though, after all, only a political death, for its spirit still lives! And the world of our day, when not at war, turns with every advancing step more toward the marvelous culture of ancient Greece and away from the Roman type of civilization. Roman law has been superceded everywhere by more humane jurisprudence, but the Milesian Venus, the Acropolis, the Iliad and the Odyssee are still admired, as they were in their pristine freshness, as ideal creations of the cultured human mind.

Now, as we look back upon the long and slow course of human development, we cannot fail to observe—and medical and social statistics verify the observation—that the average man of the present is much superior to his social equal of the past. He lives better and, therefore, longer; he is also stronger, his manners – speaking *very* generally—are milder; there are in proportion to the population and in countries where civilization is more than a sham, fewer murders, robberies and other crimes of violence committed. In this the result of civilization? Ah, would to heaven that it were, but it is not! It is the result of culture, of which the Christian religion is a strong motive force; it is the result of the development of the *inner* man! For civilization with its laws, codes, etc., can do no more than punish the transgressor *after* his evil deed or, at best, frighten him out

of his contemplated crime (a theory modern criminology vainly tries to discard), while the culture of the heart *prevents* crime by generating in the heart a horror of wronging a fellow-being. And if civilization itself has assumed a slightly more ideal aspect, if it has grown more clement in its adjudications, more mild in its punitive measures, is it not because *cultured* hearts have influenced civilized legislation? Whither the course of human development shall yet lead, to what height of perfection humanity shall grow, there is no telling. What we do know is that progress is our duty; that we should leave this world better than we found it; that the progress of the human species as such is but the aggregate, the sum total of the development of each individual; and, finally, that this development must—and can only—come from *within*. However much it may be assisted from without, the mainspring of our development lies within ourselves. Aid from without can do no more than awaken the cultural forces where they lie dormant, which is not infrequently the case.

How can this be done? Simply enough, by raising the functions of the senses, the action of the eye and ear, above their merely physiological level; by inducing them to carry their impressions not merely to the registering intellect, but past it—to the soul. This is possible only through the agency of art, as the Churches of every known creed in the world have acknowledged and proved by enlisting the arts in their services.

The painter and the poet teach us to see in a landscape more than its component trees, hills, brooks, etc.; they awaken in us the esthesis for beauty and, through it, the *love of nature.* The dramatist discloses to us the inner workings of the human soul under stress of circumstances. The novelist, by showing us invented, but probable, events, develops our imagination in conjunction with reason and intellect. But the best of all such services, the service that encompasses all these, is rendered by good music, for it is this "divine" art which makes the most direct appeal to the human heart and which, because of its profound, if unprovable, logic is the greatest disciplinarian of imagination and emotion. In some inexplicable, mysterious way music appeals to what is best in us. The heartstrings that have been jarred by the world, music puts them in tune again. It works upon the inner man as sunlight does upon the outer. Of all the innumerable mysteries that surround us day by day, music is the profoundest and the sweetest.

The observation may find a place here that the conduct of followers of esthetic pursuits of life—*artists* of every branch—has seldom, perhaps never, called forth judicial penalties of the graver sort. By rousing the jealousy (in love-affairs) of some person in political power certain painters and sculptors have suffered imprisonment *unjustly*, but this happened in medieval times; though even such in-

justice, strange to say, has been spared to one type of artists—to musicians. This is a suggestive point, because in the past, to which this refers, the school education of even great artists has often been very meagre, and of the laws and penal code of their countries they surely were utterly ignorant. What, then, was it that effected the self-restraint which prevented them from criminality, if it was not the emotional discipline derived from their occupation; the culture of the heart, that made the intellectual concept of legalities unnecessary? A criminal knows intellectually quite well that his contemplated crime will be a breach of law, but his emotional life is too impoverished, his imagination too undeveloped, to bring to his mind the suffering his evil act would be bound to cause; the culturable cells in him are atrophied, too enfeebled to counteract his lowest instincts; the categorical imperative has withered into inactivity and—the crime is committed. Does it not suggest that the stoutest pillar of civilization falls short of improving humanity, while the culture of the heart has proved its powers in this regard in uncountable instances?

History shows that each age or era has had its favorite art. The ancient Greeks were, in the main, poets and architects; the middle ages favored painting; *ours is the age of music.* And the world realizes with ever-increasing clearness that this art —for which, as it sometimes seems, the other arts

have had to prepare the ground of human susceptibility—that this art, I say, is no mere plaything or amusement, but that it sheds its light and warmth into the deepest recesses of the soul, the true soil of "culture"; that it thus prepares this soil; that thereby it leads to a better understanding and a higher conception of life, and that in its indefiniteness—so often disparaged—lies its very strength as a stimulus to our responsive psychic activity. Says Tom Moore:

> Music! Oh, how faint, how weak
> Language fades before thy spell.
> Why should Feeling ever speak,
> When thou canst breathe her soul so well?

Could I but have a heart-to-heart talk with my kindly readers—whom I now bid an indulgence-pleading farewell—I would say to them, leave civilization to the politicians and statesmen; sooner or later they will make a mess of it. They have, so far, always done so. If you become cultured, in the heart as well as in the mind—but especially in the heart—you need no civilization; for then you will obey all "laws" by instinct. And if you learn to appreciate good music, culture will enter your heart without your knowing it. For music is the power that opens the windows of your soul to let in the stimulating air and vivifying sunlight of heart-culture.

St4

DISCARDED
Library

DISCARDED
Bethany
Library

St

Sternberg, C. von

Tempo rubato + other essays.

18
16

NOV

NOV 1 0 1937

APR 1 4 1941

C0-BYV-849